THE NATURAL DAUGHTER.

WITH

PORTRAITS OF

THE LEADENHEAD FAMILY.

A NOVEL.

By MRS. ROBINSON,

AUTHOR OF POEMS, WALSINGHAM, THE FALSE FRIEND,

&c. &c. &c.

——— Can ſuch things be,
Without our ſpecial wonder ? SHAKESPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE

NATURAL DAUGHTER.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THE unlucky termination of Mrs. Morley's dramatic campaign, and the illiberal treatment which ſhe had experienced from vulgar minds, did not more ſeverely afflict her than the diſgrace which had attended her ſiſter's miſconduct. Her heart was ſuſceptible, her ſentiments were liberal, and her feelings infinitely too acute for the repoſe of her exiſtence. She was one of thoſe ill-ſtarred mortals, whoſe boſoms

participated in the pains and pleaſures of beings, who had the inhumanity to behold her ſorrows with the moſt frigid apathy. She could not ſee a kindred breaſt throbbing with anguiſh, or ſhrinking from perſecution, without heaving a reſponſive ſigh, or beſtowing a tear to meliorate its ſufferings.

Julia had been from her infancy the favourite of her parents; ſhe wore that external paſſport to indiſcriminating minds, which is ſo often miſtaken for genuine ſenſibility. She was practiſed in the languiſhments of romantic ſoftneſs; ſhe could adapt her ſmile or faſhion her tear, to touch that chord which vibrates in boſoms unenlightened by the finely organizing hand of nature. Her mind was enfeebled by indulgence, and her temper peeviſh, becauſe it had no ſtimulating griefs to rouſe its energies, or to teach it, by the realities of

woe,

woe, to ſhake off the viſions of a capricious imagination.

Mrs. Morley knew that her ſiſter's diſpoſition was but ill ſuited to bear the perſecutions of fortune, or the malignity of a world, which never fails to triumph over the fallen and unhappy. She knew that thoſe, who in her proſperous moments hovered round her, as the inſect myriads baſk in the beams of ſummer, would, when the gloomy hour overſhadowed her perſpective, fly with the ſwiftneſs of the ſtorm, or linger in her path, to taunt her with reproaches. She was taught, by the unerring monitor Experience, that fortune bears the taliſman of fate; that the magnet which draws the buſy phalanx of ſociety together, is formed of gold; and that its only ſubſtitute, placed in the graſp of poverty, is a petrifying wand, which

freezes all the inroads to the heart.—Yet ſhe would have willingly endured the load of mortification which Julia's miſguided conduct had drawn upon herſelf; becauſe her proud mind would have placed her beyond the reach of calumny or inſult. She would, in the conſciouſneſs of innate qualities, which depend not on the periſhable baſis of worldly ſplendour, have laughed at the low ſcorn, the vulgar arrogance of leſs ennobled beings: and even in the meaneſt habitation of indigence, wounded by ingratitude, aſſailed by malevolence, chilled by neglect, or irritated by the inſolence of taunting pride, ſhe would have been the creature nature made; on which a ſtamp was ſet that eclipſed all leſſer adventitious honours.

The ſecondary cauſe of Mrs. Morley's inquietude originated in her ſeparation from Mrs. Sedgley. They had built

their fabric of eſteem on the firm foundation of congenial virtues, cemented by congenial ſorrows. The ſtrong power of ſympathy had wound a ſpell about their hearts, which ſeemed to exclude every ſentiment leſs pure and leſs exalted. Severe was the pang which was deſtined to divide them; while each commenced a new and painful journey, either to behold the flowers of fancy prematurely wither; or to know that weeds, thriving as they were deſtructive, would perpetually annoy them.

Mrs. Sedgley would willingly have quitted the dramatic company, to participate in the precarious fortunes of her friend; but the manager informed her that he ſhould exact the penalty of her engagement, if ſhe preſumed to conſult her own felicity, in preference to his intereſt or the good opinion of her patrons.

Early in the morning, Mrs. Morley, after receiving her diſcharge from the manager, ſet out in a ſtage-coach for London. Her heart was full of ſorrow: ſhe had paſſed a night of ſleepleſs meditation. The labyrinths of life were once more to be trodden; the opening path was dark and dreary; ſhe had no hand to guide her through its bewildering mazes. The nerve of feeling was ſtill throbbing with a mixture of diſdain and diſappointment; ſhe believed herſelf to be the moſt ill-fated of the human race; and, as all the joys and ſorrows of exiſtence depend, in a great meaſure, on the force of imagination, ſhe could not have been more wretched had ſhe been really what ſhe fancied.

But her pride was ſtill more powerful than her misfortunes; again the inborn ſpirit of her ſoul armed her with courage

courage to reſiſt oppreſſion. She had been deeply wounded, but the blow was given by a vulgar hand; ſhe had been treated with ſcorn, but it was the low ſcorn of recreant ignorance; ſhe had been neglected, but there was diſtinction in the neglect of unenlightened beings. She had been hurled from affluence to indigence, from the ſunny ſmiles of flattering folly, to the ſtern and darkening frown of unequivocal adverſity—that true delineator of mankind, which gives the light and ſhade of life, drawn by the hand of nature.

On the firſt day's journey, where the ſtage-coach reſted its paſſengers to dine, while they were at table a chaiſe and four ſtopped to change horſes. Mrs. Morley was prompted by curioſity, natural to active minds, and riſing haſtily, flew towards the window. But as her ſteps advanced the circulation quickened at

her heart. — The traveller was Mr. Morley.

Language cannot deſcribe her diſtreſs. The alteration in her looks, for ſhe was become pale and meagre; the ſhabby appearance of her dreſs; the deep dejection which marked her features; the mode of her travelling; and the profeſſion, which neceſſity had compelled her to adopt, without the knowledge of her huſband, all conſpired to ſhake her fortitude and to awaken her apprehenſions.

For the firſt time in her life, the littleneſs of worldly vanity uſurped a momentary influence over her feelings. She felt a faint flush of ſhame diffuſing itſelf on her cheek, while her eyes, bent downwards, contemplated her half-ſoiled gown, of the coarſeſt muſlin; her once white gloves, which had ſerved for many a ſcenic exhibition; and her worn

out

out veil, through whoſe more than woven tranſparency her tears were viſible to every obſerver.

There, thought ſhe, there ſits the uninjured huſband, who has driven me from the home which I have not diſhonoured. He is proſperous and happy; he revels in the luxury of his heart's utmoſt wiſhes. She now obſerved the poſtillions juſt going to mount their horſes; her heart beat convulſively; ſhe again looked at herſelf, then at the chaiſe. At this moment the landlord, who waited on the paſſengers, reminded her that the ſtage would ſoon ſet out, and deſired her not to keep the dinner on the table. "We have more hungry gueſts waiting," ſaid he, "while you are amuſing yourſelf with gazing through the windows."

"You are in great haſte," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"Why there is nothing to look at that can concern you," interrupted the ſurly hoſt."

"Mind your own affairs, and do not be impertinent," replied Mrs. Morley, peeviſhly.

"Impertinent indeed!" repeated the innkeeper; "I like to ſee ſtage-coach travellers giving themſelves airs, like people of conſequence. I ſhall remove the dinner, for that is, at leaſt, my buſineſs." — He was preparing to fulfil his word, when Mrs. Morley, urged on by irritation and diſtreſs, opened the glaſs door before which ſhe ſtood, and, without the power to utter a ſyllable, ruſhed towards the carriage.

Here the pride of her heart triumphed over its ſenſibility. The inſulting language of an undiſcriminating ſtranger was leſs ſupportable than even the reſentment of an unfeeling huſband. Her power

power of ſpeech was ſtill denied her; but her eyes, her whole countenance ſpoke with an eloquence that mocked the force of words; her cheek became more pale; a tear ſtill lingered on it; it was the pure appeal of nature to the heart; and no heart but ſuch a one as Mr. Morley's could have reſiſted its perſuaſion.

Mrs. Morley attempted to articulate, "Do you not know me?" but her lip quivered, and her tone of voice was ſcarcely audible. A loud laugh from her fellow paſſengers, who had placed themſelves at the window to watch the reſult of her extraordinary conduct, augmented her diſtreſs, while ſhe leant againſt the wheel of her huſband's carriage, overpowered and feeble. Mr. Morley deſcended; and raiſing her veil, beheld a countenance that would have

ſoftened a ſoul of adamant. Her eyes were cloſed, her lip was colourleſs, her dark brows were convulſed, and the tear ſtill gliſtened, as if the coldneſs of her cheek had frozen it.

CHAP. XXIX.

MR. MORLEY ſupported her on his arm and they entered the inn. The landlord bowed them into the beſt apartment, now ſmiling and now afraid; rather wiſhing to place the attention of the poſt-horſe traveller to the account of humanity, than ſuppoſing that the ſtage-coach paſſenger was of that rank in life which vulgar minds conſider as the moſt reſpectable.

As ſoon as Mr. Morley and his wife were left alone, with a tone half ſevere and half tremulous, he addreſſed her. "Martha," ſaid he, "how comes it that you are in this altered ſtate, an unprotected wanderer? What has produced this change?"

"Neceſ-

"Neceſſity," replied Mrs. Morley.

"Whither are you going?" was the ſecond queſtion.

"Indeed I ſcarcely know."

"Whence came you?"

She named the place which ſhe had quitted that morning.

"What was your buſineſs there?" Mrs. Morley ſighed, and after a few moments of ſtruggling heſitation replied, "To obtain the means of life, without doing any thing diſhonourable that may embitter it by remembrance."

"What were the means?"

"The exerciſe of thoſe talents which heaven ſometimes beſtows as the ſubſtitutes for fortune."

"I do not comprehend you," ſaid Mr. Morley.

"By a profeſſion—a dramatic profeſſion."

"A ſtroll-

"A ſtrolling actreſs! God forbid!" exclaimed Mr. Morley.

"Even ſo," replied Martha calmly; "for I felt aſſured that I might do credit to a purſuit which had not the power, with all its perils, to diſgrace me."

Mr. Morley's high-bearing ſeverity was humbled to the very extent of humiliation by this avowal; for with all his vaunted philanthropy, he had yet to learn that genius was the firſt and nobleſt gift of the Creator—a gift which does not periſh with the frail and mortal compound which, having borne the varying impreſſions of its deſtined hour, fades into nothing.

After pacing the room for ſome minutes, he reſumed the converſation, "Why have you diſgraced yourſelf—your family?" ſaid he.

"Rather aſk me how, ſo preſſed by poverty, ſo deſerted, ſo ſcorned, I have prevented

prevented both my own and my family's diſhonour."

"So irreligious a profeſſion!" interrupted Mr. Morley.

"Religion and humanity—at leaſt what ſeemed ſuch—deſerted me to periſh!" Mr. Morley ſhuddered.

"But your imprudent conduct," ſaid he, after a ſhort pauſe, "your raſh defiance of my authority, your protection of a baſtard——"

"I only ſnatched it from deſtruction," replied Mrs. Morley: "it had no friends, no father that would acknowledge it. Its mother had been deceived, and then deſerted, by a libertine."

"That was not your buſineſs. You could not help it: you were not acceſſary to the crime, and had therefore no right to ſhare the obloquy attending it."

"If

"If none will feel for thoſe that err, where are we to hope for reformation?" ſaid Mrs. Morley. "Oh! if the firſt fault were but more frequently forgiven, how few would commit a ſecond! But it is the chilling breath of reproof that chaſes the bluſh of honeſt ſhame, while it fixes a ſmile of ſcorn upon the cheek that braves all the throbbings of compunction."

"You have been impoſed on—you have diſgraced your feelings by believing the fabricated tale of ſome hypocritical impoſtor. You would have had me held forth as an example of credulity, in addition to others which the world has ſeen; and by perſuading me to ſanction a ſuppoſed child of reputable extraction, had ſheltered under my roof the illegitimate offspring of a ſhameleſs mother: you would have perſuaded me that the blood of a noble parent flowed in

in its veins, while its vital ſource in reality ſprang from plebeian baſeneſs."

"I never wiſhed to do more than humanity would have ſanctioned; and had I done leſs, I ſhould not have been worthy of your confidence," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"Where is the child?" inquired her huſband.

"I conſigned it to the protection of its father," replied Mrs. Morley.

"Of its father!" repeated Mr. Morley, with a penetrating look. "I thought you were a ſtranger to its origin! Who was its father?"

"A man of rank and fortune," anſwered Martha, bluſhing. "But," added ſhe, with a confuſed tone and manner, "I am not bound to reveal that which you will——"

"What?"

"What?" interrupted Mr. Morley, ſternly.

"You overpower me," ſaid Martha; "you intimidate me by your violence: but you ſhall never force me to betray a being whom I would ever hold neareſt to my heart, even though you menaced to arreſt its beating."

"Infamous woman!" exclaimed Mr. Morley; "the infant was your own!"

Mrs. Morley ſmiled with half-ſtifled ſcorn, but made no anſwer.

"Your ſmile is but a tacit confirmation of your guilt," ſaid Mr. Morley, now more impetuouſly vindictive than ever. "Your falſehood is unqueſtionable. Your low, licentious occupation marks the tenor of your mind. All the claims of honour and religion are violated by your conduct; and your name will be handed down to poſterity with diſgrace,

diſgrace, if it be not conſigned to perpetual oblivion."

"I can endure your reproaches, becauſe I feel conſcious of not deſerving them," replied Mrs. Morley: "but no mortal power ſhall force me to acknowledge that ſaving a friendleſs child from miſery or death is infamous or even culpable. Its father was a high-born libertine, a *right honourable* deceiver, who had betrayed its mother under promiſes the moſt ſacred."

"What is the mother?" interrupted Mr. Morley.

"A woman, and therefore entitled to the protection of the being who deceived her."

"What is her ſituation—her rank in life?"

"She is alſo a ſtrolling actreſs."

"And you defend her! You talk of her virtues—her misfortunes! Ridiculous!

diculous! Return with me to Morley-houſe: conſent to ſeclude yourſelf for ever from the world's reproaches; and evince, by penitence, a juſt ſenſe of your paſt folly: I will then conceal your diſgrace."

"Rather ſay my ſorrows—thoſe ſorrows to which diſtreſs and perſecution have expoſed me," ſaid Mrs. Morley. "It is eaſy to condemn: but it is the privilege of Fortune's favourites; and the unhappy have no remedy but ſilent ſcorn."

"My heart aches when I reflect on your imprudence."

"Your pride ſhrinks when you recollect my humiliations. Would to heaven, that your conſcience were equally ſuſceptible of my wrongs!" replied Martha.

"If

"If you can bear ſecluſion, my houſe is open to receive you," cried Mr. Morley.

"I muſt be received acquitted, or not received at all," replied Martha.

"Then follow your own propenſities," cried Mr. Morley; "be wretched by inclination—by choice be degraded! Abjure all the refinements of ſenſibility, all the moral graces that once adorned you." So ſaying, he quitted the room; and before Mrs. Morley had power to expoſtulate on the impetuoſity of his conduct the chaiſe departed from the inn door, leaving her to reflect on the benignity and feeling of a profeſſed philanthropiſt.

CHAP. XXX.

AFTER heaving a deep ſigh, which in ſome degree unburthened her full heart, ſhe returned to the place where ſhe had left her travelling companions. On her entering the parlour, every countenance evinced the predominating opinion of every mind, and all conſpired to betray a ſecret pleaſure at that diſappointment which wrung her breaſt with unutterable anguiſh.

She now felt herſelf faint, having taſted nothing ſince day-break. The dinner-table had been removed during her interview with Mr. Morley, and the ſtage-coachman informed the paſ-

ſengers that the horſes were ready to depart.

Two females, who had been the morning companions of Mrs. Morley's journey, now conſulted each other in an audible whiſper. "It is the ſame," ſaid one; "I now remember having ſeen her at Bath! She eloped from her huſband with a young libertine nobleman, and has ever ſince been roving about the country with ſtrolling actors. For my part I would rather forfeit my place in the coach, than ſit beſide a woman of ſuch a deſcription."

"And if you quit the carriage, what will become of me?" cried the other. "It is evident, from her conduct ſince we ſtopped to dine, that ſhe is capable of any improper behaviour. The man with whom ſhe quitted our ſociety was——"

"My

"My huſband, madam," interrupted Mrs. Morley ſternly.

"I thought ſo!" exclaimed the firſt, who had objected to her ſociety.

"Why, madam, did you think ſo?" inquired Mrs. Morley.

"By the evident contempt with which he treated you," replied the faſtidious traveller. "When a huſband abandons his wife, ſhe muſt expect that the world will ſhew her little kindneſs."

"Though while ſhe is countenanced by him, the moſt licentious profligacy may be paſſed over in ſilent toleration," replied Mrs. Morley. "Shame, ſhame on ſuch diſtinctions! Shame on that cuſtom which permits an unbluſhing wife to brave the eye of ſcorn, becauſe her deviation from propriety is attended with the moſt culpable hypocriſy, and

patiently endured by a diſhonoured huſband."

"Yours, at leaſt, was not of that deſcription," ſaid the moral-mending traveller.

"No, madam; thank heaven, my huſband never was diſhonoured," replied Mrs. Morley; "though he is diſgraced by expoſing an unoffending woman to the inſolence of vulgar commentators."

The faſtidious obſerver now rung the bell with violence. "Order a chaiſe for this lady and myſelf!" ſaid ſhe, pointing to her fellow-traveller. "It is not poſſible for women of reputation to proceed in the ſame carriage with ſtrolling actreſſes." Mrs. Morley ſmiled. The ſtage-driver again reminded them that he was waiting, and

Mrs.

Mrs. Morley, with one male paſſenger, took her ſeat; leaving the over-delicate travellers to reflect at leiſure.

The reader has probably, in the journey of exiſtence, remarked that the moſt ſcrupulous part of the female ſex are generally thoſe who feel the ſtrongeſt diſpoſition to err. Some, indeed there are who, their vices being varniſhed over by the golden hand of Proſperity, ſuddenly aſſume a vulgar ſelf-importance which, ſo far from obliterating their faults, draws them more glaringly into notice; and, ſhame on the falſe morality of the age! ſuch women, with no *mental* paſſport to reſpect, with no claim excepting the ill-acquired wealth which they unbluſhingly diſplay, receive the

countenance even of the moſt faſtidiouſly virtuous. The ſtage-coach commentator was a female of this deſcription.

CHAP. XXXI.

It happened that Mrs. Morley's remaining companion was a man "learned in the law," of moſt conciliating manners, and ſo indefatigable in the labours of his profeſſion, that he never loſt an opportunity of urging a ſuit. His ſagacity was equal to his induſtry; and at the firſt glance he perceived that Mrs. Morley was a fair ſubject for his attention.

They had not travelled far when Mr. Snatchem commenced his pleadings with all the myſtery of confuſed and incomprehenſible explanation. He aſſured Mrs. Morley that neither her talents nor her perſecutions had eſcaped his notice; and he declared that though

the Leadenheads were a very powerful and numerous family, he ſhould feel the moſt ſuperlative gratification in oppoſing the claims of inſulted genius to the ſordid arrogance of oſtentatious inſignificance. Mr. Snatchem alſo informed Mrs. Morley that her opponents were more feared than honoured, reſpected, or beloved; that there were many worthy and far more popular perſons in the county who would rejoice in the humiliation of the parties; and that it would procure him infinite praiſe as well as pleaſure to commence a proceſs, which would at once avenge her wrongs, and expoſe the malevolence of her enemies.

Mrs. Morley's feelings had been too ſeverely wounded by the Leadenhead cabal not to make her heart throb with delight at the idea of retaliation. The inſolent contempt and ſcorn with which ſhe

ſhe had been treated; the low and malignant arts that had been practiſed to mortify and vex her; the miſerable exultation which they diſplayed when her repoſe and her fame were made the ſubjects of their ſubtle machinations; determined her to loſe no opportunity of ſeeking retribution. Mr. Snatchem was the willing inſtrument of revenge; and Mrs. Morley, after explaining all her cauſes of complaint, authoriſed him to commence a ſuit without farther conſultation.

On Mrs. Morley's arrival in London, ſhe again repaired to her old lodgings in the vicinity of Bloomſbury-ſquare. A faint hope ſuggeſted to her mind the poſſibility that during her abſence lord Francis had not wholly forgotten her: it was probable, ſhe thought, that he had either ſent or called to inquire after her; and, at a moment when the heart

is heavy with the preſſure of ſorrow, the ſmalleſt proof of kindneſs comes with redoubled power to ſolace. Lord Francis was, to all external appearance, too amiable to be known and not eſteemed by a woman of Mrs. Morley's judgment and ſuſceptibility: but the pride of her heart was ſtill its impenetrable ſafeguard againſt every encroachment of the paſſions, which might in the ſmalleſt degree tend to her degradation.

Her lodgings were vacant, and ſhe engaged them. Weary of a profeſſion which had already preſented ſuch diſtreſſing viciſſitudes, ſhe was again at a loſs to determine on any plan for her future ſupport. The buſy metropolis, it is true, preſented a variety of roads to independence: but a female without protection, or even the power to apply for character to her own relatives—a being,

being, who ſeemed alone even in the midſt of multitudes, had little to hope for from a world ſelfiſh and prejudging. She knew that men would ſeek to betray her; that women, through envy or malignity, would affect to ſuppoſe her reprehenſible. With theſe opinions, which were the reſult of experience and reflection, ſhe reſolved to adopt ſome new mode of obtaining a ſubſiſtence; and after various reſolutions, rapidly formed and as rapidly relinquiſhed; after weighing and rejecting, muſing and trembling, hoping, fearing, and anticipating the chances for and againſt her in the revolving wheel of fortune, ſhe determined on making the modern experiment, both for the attainment of fame and profit, by writing a Novel.

She was now at a loſs what kind of ſtory to delineate. The terrific had been worn to a mere ſpectre; the lively

required either keen ſatire or genuine wit to make it tolerably palatable; the ſentimental would no longer ſuit the languid nerves of thoſe who were devoted to diſſipation; and the pathetic, which deſcribed the force of enthuſiaſtic honour and genuine ſenſibility, was deemed both gothic and unnatural; chivalry was out of faſhion; the tales of adventurous knights were conſidered as ridiculouſly romantic; and the ſober leſſons of good ſenſe and morality had long been conſigned, excluſively, to the ſhelves of boarding-ſchool libraries.

During ſix weeks ſhe confined herſelf to inceſſant labour, at the end of which time ſhe completed a work of two volumes. The ſtory was melancholy, the portraits drawn from living characters, and the title both intereſting and attractive.

Elated

Elated with the hope of attaining at leaſt a ſprig of that prolific laurel which in theſe reading days ſpreads its wide and pliant branches over every ſpecies of literature, Mrs. Morley, with her lettered bantling, ſet out for the mart of mental traffic, yclept the Row of Paternoſter. After offering her firſt-born to a variety of patrons, ſhe was informed that the market was already overſtocked, and that the ſpecies of compoſition in which ſhe had indulged her fancy was become a very drug, only palatable to ſplenetic valetudinarians and boarding-ſchool miſſes. She ſighed as ſhe quitted the renowned emporium of genius, and with a deſponding heart directed her footſteps towards the more faſhionable vicinity of Pall-Mall and Bond-ſtreet.

There ſhe again found obſtacles almoſt inſurmountable. The characters were drawn from life, and the bookſellers

were fearful of proſecutions. After various attempts to diſpoſe of her literary treaſure, a daſhing publiſher, in order to encourage a firſt attempt, and in compliance with her earneſt ſolicitations, gave her ten pounds for the work; aſſuring her, at the ſame time, with mortifying commiſeration, that he ſhould loſe very conſiderably by the bargain.

"We have our warehouſes full of unſold ſentimental novels already," ſaid Mr. Index: "they only ſell for waſte paper; and you may frequently ſee 'The Tears of Genius,' 'Moral Tales,' 'Wedded Love,' 'Diſintereſted Attachment,' 'The Felicities of Friendſhip,' and 'The Sublime Syſtem of Social Sympathy,' lining trunks, or enveloping the merchandize of paſtry-cooks and cheeſe-mongers." Mrs. Morley ſighed. Mr. Index continued.

"If

" If you have any talent for ſatire, you may write a work that would be worth purchaſing: or if your fertile pen can make a ſtory out of ſome recent popular event, ſuch as an highly-faſhioned elopement, a deſerted, diſtracted huſband, an abandoned wife, an ungrateful runaway daughter, or a ſon ruined by ſharpers; with ſuch a title as 'Noble Daring; or, The Diſintereſted Lovers;' '*Chacun à ſon Tour*; or, The Modern Huſband;' 'Paſſion in Leading-Strings; or, Love's Captive;' 'Modern Wives and Antique Spouſes,' 'Old Dowagers and Schoolboy Lovers,' or any thing from real life of equal celebrity or notoriety, your fortune is made; your works will ſell, and you will either be admired or feared by the whole phalanx of faſhionable readers; particularly if you have the good luck to be menaced with a proſecution."

" Heaven

"Heaven forbid!" cried Mrs. Morley.

"O! I ſee you are but a novice in the arcanum of literature," ſaid the bookſeller. "You are too timid ever to obtain the laurel of victory: you will never daſh into the broad ſtream of popularity, or bathe in the luxurious ſea of ſatirical celebrity: you will never wield the keen-edged weapon in the field of ridicule, or ſcatter, amidſt the flowers of Parnaſſus, the ſeeds of critical contention: you will write with a mere pen!"

"What elſe ſhould I write with?" ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"A lancet, to be ſure. You ſhould cut your ſubject keenly; make your operations ſalutary; teach your patients to tremble, while you cure them of their moſt obſtinate and contagious follies. A pen! ridiculous! Who now thinks of

of writing with a pen, except a few old, hum-drum novelists, who convert sermons into romances, and make the press tremble, while it groans with their ponderous faragoes of moral insipidity. No, no; if you wish for celebrity, write with a lancet; touch your subject lightly, neatly, but effectually; and, above all things, mind the title. Nothing in these times will sell so highly as a title."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Morley.

"Most assuredly. A title is the thing above all others. It pleases every order of the high world, and charms into admiration every species of the low: it will cover a multitude of faults: a kind of compendious errata, which sets to rights all the errors of a work, and makes it popular, however incorrect and illiterate it may appear to the eyes of fastidious criticisers. Mind a title. Do

not forget that a title is a wonderful harmonizer of things, in all ranks and all opinions of men, both morally and politically." Mrs. Morley ſmiled.

"How do you mean to make your book ſell?" continued Mr. Index. "You ſhould write a Dedication, full of fine words and laboured panegyric. That part of your buſineſs ſhould be done ſkilfully. A feather of the fineſt dimenſions, dipped in honey, will compoſe an excellent introductory paſſport. You muſt be careful to enumerate all the good qualities of your patron, and to ſkim lightly over all the bad ones. You muſt profeſs yourſelf his obedient and devoted ſervant; and before you conclude your tribute to his many ineſtimable virtues, you muſt not forget to declare that you abhor flattery, and that your mind is as independent as your writings."

While

While Mrs. Morley was liſtening to the intelligent Mr. Index, a young woman entered the ſhop. She came to change a book. "I want another novel," ſaid ſhe, "but I have forgot the name."

"Why you had this not an hour ſince," ſaid Mr. Index. "How troubleſome theſe women are! They never get through more than the firſt ſix pages; they then dip into the middle, and conclude their reading by glancing over the cataſtrophe. Were it not for the labours of ſome novel-manufactories, we ſhould never be able to ſatisfy our female cuſtomers." Then turning to the ſhopman, Mr. Index added, "Send any thing: the lady never looks beyond the table of contents."

"It was ſomething about Virtue Rewarded," ſaid the girl, recollecting herſelf.

"O, child!

"O, child! that is a work of ſuch gothic antiquity, that we have not had one copy in our ſhop theſe twenty years. Nobody would think of doſing over ſuch dull leſſons. If your miſtreſs wants ſomething to make her melancholy, I recommend 'Delicate Diſtreſſes,' 'Victims of Senſibility,' 'The Sorrows of Love,' 'The Deſerted Wife——"

"O dear, ſir!" interrupted the girl, "we have enough of thoſe already. My miſtreſs is confined to her bed with a putrid fever, and I believe ſhe has not even money to pay the doctor." Mrs. Morley ſhuddered.

"Is ſhe very ill?" inquired Mr. Index: "Is her diſorder catching."

"Yes, ſir; and ſhe ſends back the book you choſe for her this morning, becauſe it is full of diſtreſſes and misfortunes."

"To

"To infect half the town with her diſorder," cried Mr. Index angrily. "I have known no leſs than four perſons deſtroyed within the laſt ſix weeks, merely by the infection which has been conveyed through the medium of novels. Nothing can be more deſtructive. It is really ſingular that ſick people will read works of genius, while the ſtalls are groaning with ſermons at ſixpence a dozen."

"O here is the name of the book," ſaid the girl, taking a paper from the leaves of the returned novel. It was written on the ſuperſcription of a torn letter. Mrs. Morley's curioſity was excited by the mournful account which the girl had given of her miſtreſs's ſituation; therefore, after reading the name, ſhe followed the meſſenger into the ſtreet. "Is your miſtreſs really ill?"

"I am afraid ſhe is dying ma'am."

"Take

"Take her this paper," ſaid Martha, and tell her that Mrs. Morley will call upon her to-morrow morning. Mind that you do not loſe it; it is a five-pound bank-note." The girl took the money, and with joy viſible in her countenance haſtened to relieve her ſuffering miſtreſs.

Reader, accuſe not Martha of unthinking prodigality. The poor, the afflicted female, whoſe ſorrows pierced her heart, was her ſiſter—the deſerted Julia.

CHAP. XXXII.

THE night paſſed ſleepleſs. Mrs. Morley's pillow was uneaſy, becauſe her mind wandered to that where diſeaſe and vexation fevered the brain of her imprudent ſiſter. She roſe as ſoon as the ſhops were opened, and haſtened to Julia's lodgings. As ſhe approached the door her heart beat quickly with a mixture of pity and affection. She longed, yet dreaded to behold the altered face of her proud and unfeeling enemy: but that enemy was overwhelmed with ſickneſs and with ſorrow, and Martha almoſt taught herſelf to think ſhe was her friend.

Still

Still her boſom throbbed convulſively. There was a ſenſation of forgiving tenderneſs; but there was alſo a ſtrong ſenſe of injury, which ſtruggled for pre-eminence. Nothing could prevent Martha's ſeeing her ſiſter; yet ſomething told her that there was meanneſs in the viſit. This ſiſter had driven her from her natural home; from the boſom of her mother; from the world, from its ſociety.—But Julia was in diſtreſs; ſhe was puniſhed for her unkindneſs; ſhe wanted that ſupport which the induſtry and talents of Martha enabled her to beſtow.—"I am favoured by Heaven," ſaid ſhe, ſighing; "poor Julia is an outcaſt; ſhe has no friend.

"Yes, yes, Julia! thou haſt ſtill one friend," continued Martha, as ſhe knocked at the door of her ſiſter's lodgings.

The

The maſter of the houſe informed her that the lady had departed the preceding night; leaving a letter for Mrs. Morley, which he then delivered.—Martha's hand trembled as ſhe took it.—She thought, ſhe hoped, to have embraced a repentant ſiſter; to have conſoled her, and to have lent her aid in ſhielding her boſom from the world's unkindneſs. She endeavoured to break the ſeal, but was prevented by the thought, that, perhaps the contents of the letter might be unpleaſing or even painful. Her heart was ſoftened, full, and palpitating. Her tears were ready to ruſh into her eyes in the ſtreet. I ſhall only expoſe myſelf, thought ſhe. I will take the letter to my lodgings.

She haſtened along one ſtreet, then along another. Every moment acquiring courage, and again loſing it, while the

the letter was ſtill the object of inquietude. At length, unable to bear the anxiety which lay heavy on her mind, ſhe called an hackney-coach, and entering it haſtily, bade the coachman drive to Bloomſbury-ſquare. No ſooner had he laſhed his wretched animals into motion, than Mrs. Morley opened Julia's letter. It contained a requeſt that ſhe would not trouble herſelf with affairs which did not concern her. For, that Julia had made a vow never again to own a ſtrolling actreſs as a ſiſter. Mrs. Morley was nearly overwhelmed. The coach arrived at her lodgings, and ſhe paſſed the remainder of the day in regret that was unutterable.

On the following morning Mrs. Morley ſet out to make inquiries after little Fanny; and to her inexpreſſible chagrin, ſhe heard, that lady Louiſa Franklin had, only ten days before, departed

parted from the metropolis, taking her infant *protegée* as the companion of her journey. "Poor Fanny!" ſighed Mrs. Morley; "ſhe would not have treated me as Julia did; and yet I did not love my ſiſter leſs. But there is ſomething in kindred blood that freezes, when the blaſt of poverty blows cold: it is the bright, the ſummer ſun of proſperous fortune, that draws forth ſmiles and offices of kindneſs."

Mrs. Morley then made a viſit to Crutched Friars, where ſhe was informed that her mother had removed from London, and afterwards had died of a broken heart, in conſequence of Julia's imprudent conduct. By this intelligence Martha's affliction ſeemed completed. Her mother dead! an orphan's miſery was hers; for ſhe had no friend to ſolace or to protect her. Her

unfeeling huſband was too proud to recal her wandering footſteps, or even to deſtroy the poiſonous weeds that, growing in her path, menaced her deſtruction. A wife, a young and lovely woman, expoſed to the inſidious machinations of man; deſerted, driven forth to ſeek for ſupport, alone, and ſtigmatized!—How many, like Martha, have been hurried on to ruin, by the ſharp ſting of kindred perſecution! How many generous, feeling, noble natures have withered in obſcurity and ſorrow; while dulneſs, ignorance, and overweening pride revel in luxury, and ſet all the claims of modeſt merit at defiance.

CHAP. XXXIII.

ONCE more left with no reſource but that which would ariſe from her own talents, Mrs. Morley reſolved on making another effort. The wide world was ſtill before her: ſhe had for many months read the book of human nature, and was now tolerably acquainted with the various characters it preſented. At firſt ſhe thought of dipping her pen in the Heliconian fountain; but after ſending ſeveral poetical pieces to the magazines and newſpapers, ſhe found that her thoughts were too refined, her ſubjects too delicate for the vitiated taſte of the preſent day.—She could not pen the coarſe *double entendre* of a modern

epigram; nor could ſhe court the patronage of dullneſs, by offering flattering incenſe at the ſhrine of vanity. This mode of obtaining an independence was therefore relinquiſhed.

She then thought of gaining a livelihood by the dull drudgery of diffuſing knowledge in a ſeminary of faſhionable education; and therefore offered her ſervices, as the daughter of the late wealthy Mrs. Popkins, in the capacity of a teacher at a boarding ſchool near the metropolis. Her manners and appearance intereſted the feelings of her employer, and ſhe was engaged at a handſome ſalary, to inſtruct the young pupils in Engliſh, needle-work, and every other ſpecies of minor accompliſhments.

Here indeed her patience was put to the trial, by the ſtupidity of ſome; the infantine impertinence of others; the budding

budding pride of the high-born; the pert vulgarity of the low; while the dawning conſequence of the wealthy, and the confirmed arrogance of the dull-minded preſented to her view a little phalanx of future tyrants; coquettes in the bud of beauty; ſatiriſts yet poring over the columns of a ſpelling-book; wits in their ſlate exerciſes; with a long liſt of embryo poeteſſes, noveliſts, tragedians, prudes, peereſſes, and petticoat philoſophers.

Several months had paſſed, and Mrs. Morley, (who ſtill aſſumed the name of Deniſon,) by her attention to the duties of her occupation, commanded the eſteem of her employer and affection of her pupils, when one evening a chaiſe and four ſtopped at the gates, and a young lady was immediately introduced as an inmate.

The gentleman who accompanied the new ſcholar, departed: Mrs. Morley received the juvenile charge, and conducted her from the parlour to the ſchool-room. She was near eleven years old, pert, bold, and forward; her tone was arrogant, her demeanour haughty, her brow elevated, and her glances contemptuous; ſhe ſcarcely condeſcended to converſe with her companions, and paſſed nearly the remainder of the evening in gloomy ſilence; making notes on the table of her little brain either to the prejudice or advantage of every one preſent.

Mrs. Morley's reſt was diſturbed by unpleaſing anticipations; ſhe beheld a new ſcene of perplexity now opening before her; ſhe was uneaſy, vexed, and apprehenſive. Gentle reader, ſhe had cauſe for her inquietude: the pupil whoſe arrival had been marked with ſuch

ſuch unfavourable proſpects, was the youngeſt daughter of Mr. Humphrey Leadenhead.

The name of Deniſon was ſtill freſh in the memory of Miſs Sophiniſba Leadenhead; but the pleaſure which ſhe would have felt in indulging a family propenſity, was counteracted by that powerful ſilencer Family Pride; and ſhe did not acquaint her governeſs that Mrs. Morley was a wandering comedian; becauſe ſuch information might lead to a diſcovery that ſhe was alſo the ſiſter of the imprudent Julia. But though Sophiniſba's prudence kept her ſilent, as far as her tone of voice was within hearing of her governeſs, ſhe did not fail to communicate the ſecret to her juvenile companions. The malignant tale was whiſpered with confidence; and Mrs. Morley's authority decreaſed in proportion as her character

became doubtful. On the ſchool breaking up at the Eaſter vacation, every heart was throbbing to unravel the important enigma; and the miſtreſs of the ſeminary on recalling her young family to the labours of education, found the number diminiſhed from fifty to five and thirty. The cauſe of ſo extraordinary a deſertion was demanded; and her anſwer was, that perſons of fortune and reſpectability could not ſuffer the morals of their daughters to be contaminated by the looſe opinions and familiar manners of an itinerant actreſs. Such were the doctrines of ignorance and prejudice; and the reader will judge more correctly on the diſcernment and rationality of the ſentence, when he is informed, that of thoſe faſtidious commentators, whoſe imperious mandate would have conſigned a deſerving object to ſhame and to affliction, there was not

not an individual whoſe rank in life ſoared above mediocrity; while thoſe of loftier birth and more enlightened education, reſpected the merit and applauded the induſtry which had led Mrs. Morley to adopt a profeſſion, at once honourable to her heart and creditable to her talents.

The conſequence of this unfortunate diſcovery was Mrs. Morley's diſmiſſion from the habitation of her employer. Once more deſtined to ſeek for ſupport, ſhe returned to London; and again determined on exerciſing her talents till fortune ſhould preſent a new proſpect of independence. Mrs. Morley, on taking leave of her juvenile pupils, wrote the following ſtanzas, which ſhe left with her employer; who, while ſhe felt the neceſſity of parting with her,

lamented the ſeverity which occaſioned their ſeparation.

As o'er the world, by ſorrow preſt,
I wander, ſad and weary;
In hopes to find a place of reſt,
From ſcenes forlorn and dreary:
Where'er I go, I'm doom'd to trace,
If fortune ſmiles, the ſmiling face;
But if ſhe frowns, I'm ſure to ſee,
On every face, a frown for *me!*

When morning bluſhes through her tears,
And nature ſtaunts her treaſures,
How gaudy every path appears,
How rich, in boundleſs pleaſures!
But if the dawn in miſty gloom
Still veils the flowret's vivid bloom,
How droops in ſhade the loftieſt tree,
Whoſe ſpreading boughs had ſhelter'd *me!*

Nor truth nor feeling can inſure
The friend that's ever ſmiling;
Worth cannot worldly mis'ry cure,
Its darkeſt hours beguiling;

This

This heart, which owns the pureſt flame,
Muſt patient throb, nor dare to blame,
Since fortune's frown, the fates decree,
Through ev'ry ſcene ſhou'd follow *me!*

Thus all things light or dark appear,
As fortune cheers or ſaddens;
For time flies ſlow when grief is near,
But ſwift when tranſport gladdens.
Hope is a tranſient ſummer dream,
Where viſions gay and flattering ſeem;
But truth and reaſon wake to ſee
Them waſte away and fade like *me!*

O! come, capricious Fortune, blind,
Subdue this boſom's feeling;
Make dim the fire that warms my mind,
Thence all its fervour ſtealing;
Teach me the ſordid ſervile art,
To dreſs in low diſguiſe the heart,
Then every face ſhall chearful be,
And wear a gentle ſmile for *me!*

CHAP. XXXIV.

MRS. Morley, on her return to London, hired a convenient though not ſplendid lodging at the weſt end of the town. The change in her ſituation, from that which her former days had preſented, produced little or no effect upon her feelings. Conſcious that her preſent plan of economy originated in a proud ſpirit, which panted for independence, as well as in a deſire to act honourably, ſhe little cared what an intereſted world thought reſpecting the apparent decreaſe of her uſual expenſes. Mrs. Morley knew that the mind derived no importance from adventitious circumſtances; ſhe therefore left it to the dull and the unenlightened

unenlightened to diſplay the only diſtinctions they poſſeſſed, the favours of fortune; while ſhe looked down with a ſigh of commiſeration on the weary children of folly and diſſipation.

From her window ſhe obſerved the paſſing throngs, like the gaudy ephemera of a ſummer noon; the glittering atoms, which dazzle for an hour, and then ſhrink into nothing. There did ſhe contemplate, with a philoſophic ſmile, the motley idols of capricious fortune: the light goſſomary viſions of a day, borne on the gale and towering in the warm regions of a proſperous deſtiny; or ſhrinking from the cutting blaſts of poverty, and creeping to oblivion.

Often did ſhe mark the cold retiring aſpect of deſerting friendſhip, the freezing half bend of diſtant civility, or the familiar nod of low preſuming vanity. She ſaw features fixed in the unmeaning

unmeaning caſt of vacancy, while they paſſed ſide-glancing at her habitation; and faces aghaſt with wonder that a female ſhould evince both prudence and reſolution, even in the very vortex of vice and prodigality. She obtained little credit from the malevolent obſerver for that correct demeanor which marked a proud elevation of mind, even amidſt the humiliations of fortune; while from the faſtidious ſhe ſcarcely obtained the juſtice of credibility.

It was then that ſhe *really* knew many of thoſe worldly aſſociates who fly with the warm beams of a ſummer deſtiny; many who had obtruſively paid homage to her mind, and obſequiouſly courted her ſociety, when ſhe was above the neceſſity of ſeeking patronage, but who now, grown ſuddenly faſtidious, ſcarcely condeſcended to recognize her. Indeed ſhe was evidently changed by the viciſſi-

tudes

tudes of her deſtiny! for adverſity ſo alters the features, that even our "neareſt friends do not know us;" and that cheek which uſed to ſmile, and that lip which was the placid emblem of a contented ſpirit, were now pale with the inceſſant ruminations of the brain, and expreſſive of a ſcornful pride which, originating in conſcious rectitude, diſdained to court the ignorant or flatter the unworthy.

Various were the ſenſations of her mind while ſhe looked down upon the exalted, and pitied the unfeeling; for often did ſhe behold the audacious ſmile of uplifted vice upon that cheek from which ſhe had chaced the tear, when poverty and ſhame had bade it appeal to her for pity. Often did ſhe commiſerate the oſtentation of over-

bearing vulgarity, when ſhe obſerved the inſolence or the enormity of women, who, ſetting the grace of decency at defiance, recalled to memory their recent follies; who waſted in prodigality and taſteleſs ſhew that wealth, which might have been applied to nobler and to better purpoſes.

From the window of her new habitation ſhe daily endured the obtruſive glances of all ranks of perſons; from the venerable libertine and ennobled ſhrew, to the juvenile arbitreſs of faſhion, and the titled ſchool-boy, who had eſcaped from the Gothic walls of Eton College, to become a diſciplinarian in the field of military proweſs. Often did the ſmile of contempt involuntarily paſs over her lip, when ſhe interpreted the ſignificant looks of thoſe who

who calculate the mind's value by the outward decorations of life; often did ſhe pity the low ſcorn of unenlightened natures, when, born to that rank which they diſhonoured, women of equivocal virtue conſidered themſelves as Mrs. Morley's ſuperiors; while in reality they were as far below her in the ſcale of intellect, as they were more elevated on the revolving wheel of fortune.

But the moſt painful ſenſation which her heart felt, as ſhe ſurveyed the paſſing multitude, was that which was inflicted by forgetfulneſs: for in the buſy ſcene, it was her lot to contemplate beings whom ſhe had in her more proſperous days preſerved from abject miſery; who now repaid with low malignant triumph that charitable impulſe which warmed her heart, when they had flown to her for ſuccour; when,

abandoned

abandoned by the world, expoſed to ridicule, branded with ſhame, and ſtigmatized for infamy, they had experienced the benevolence of her nature, and bleſſed that pity which contributed to the preſervation of an exiſtence, now marked with the worſt badge of human depravity, *Ingratitude!!*

Reader—leſt the miſcreants ſhould be reſcued from oblivion by the pen of recording indignation, their names ſhall for the preſent reſt in ſilence. But whenever the vulgar pride of upſtart baſeneſs preſumes to liſt its brow above the multitude, when folly, half hid beneath a cloak of gold, obtrudes itſelf beyond the barrier of decorum, the pen of juſt and wholeſome reprehenſion ſhall never fail to mark them.

During the period that Mrs. Morley reſided in this temporary ſphere of buſy obſervation, ſhe learned a leſſon which the ſhows and empty ſplendours of exiſtence

exiſtence never could have taught her. She found that worldly friendſhips are but the fleeting coruſcations which illumine the warm hour of ſunny fortune. She proved that to *ſeem* and not to *be* was the all-powerful clue to private praiſe and public reputation. She diſcovered that the attributes of nature have little weight in the vaſt ſcale of popular eſtimation; and ſhe was convinced that vice and folly will ever find their votaries, while they place their deformities beneath the maſk of wealth: that it is not the idol to whom the ill-judging and the baſe pay homage; but to the glittering ſanctuary which enſhrines it; yes, indiſcriminating fortune! pave the dark threſhold to the den of infamy with gems and tinſel; deck the ſurrounding objects in eye-bewildering ſplendours; let pomp but ſmooth the

the level pathway to applauſe, and the multitude will cheerfully purſue it; while virtue turns away neglected and deſpiſed, and genius flies to ſolitude forgotten!

CHAP. XXXV.

MRS. Morley, under all the ſufferings of an indignant ſpirit, reſiſted the preſſure of pecuniary diſtreſs, with a degree of fortitude for which a pre-judging world allowed her little credit. But ſhe found that, not only the conſolations of life depended on the poſſeſſion of fortune's favours, but that even the gratifying ſhew of outward reſpect faded into a mere ſhadow, as the ſtorm of adverſity thickened round her. She had employed her pen, till her health was viſibly declining; ſhe had denied herſelf the comforts of exiſtence, till exiſtence itſelf was ſcarcely to be valued. All that her honourable, her inceſſant induſtry could procure, was inſufficient for the purpoſes

of

of attaining a permanent independence; and ſhe was at length ſo deeply involved, ſo menaced with deſtruction, that nothing but an effort of deſpair could ſave her. She found by painful experience, that few among the illiterate and vulgar will extend their patronage to mental worth; that the reward which the ariſtocracy of wealth beſtows is very rarely munificent; though ſelf-gratification is purchaſed at a prodigal expence, and while genius lingers in adverſity, licentious pleaſure revels in all the boundleſs luxuries of fortune.

At this moment of trial, an evil genius prompted the ſelfiſh mind of a wealthy libertine, and Mrs. Morley's humble ſituation again expoſed her to the inſults of the vulgar. Two thouſand pounds for preſent exigencies, and three hundred pounds per annum, were proferred as the price of her degradation; by

by one, who not many weeks before, had refuſed to aid her literary toils by the ſubſcription of a ſingle guinea!

Mrs. Morley's indignation was ſtrong, but her neceſſities were powerful. She ſhuddered at the idea of a ſordid ſacrifice; but ſhe had been convinced that worldly importance depends on wealth and not on virtue. The trial was a ſevere one; ſhe was trembling, fearful, perplexed, diſtreſſed, and wounded by the inſults of unfeeling perſecutors. The man of wealth was ſelfiſh, ignorant, and oſtentatious: ſhe was oppreſſed and humbled.

During this epocha of anxiety, a maſquerade was given at Renelagh. Mrs. Morley had received a ticket, and promiſed to accept the protection of her avowed ſeducer. She had never witneſſed an entertainment of that ſpecies which now tempted her curioſity, and relying on the fortitude

tude of her own heart, ſhe conſented to encounter a new ſcene of trial.

As ſoon as ſhe entered the Rotunda her ſubtle protector began to unfold his purpoſe. He pointed out to her obſervation the moſt exalted women of libertine notoriety. She ſaw them careſſed, followed, and protected, even by the moſt faſtidious. She was aſtoniſhed.

The next objects of her attention were the avowed miſtreſſes of diſtinguiſhed characters: they alſo received the ſmiles, the homage of the crowd. Their features diſplayed contented, nay even happy minds; for they, feeling their equality, in moral claims, to their high-titled contemporaries, knew no cauſe to bluſh, no fear of reprehenſion.—She reflected—ſhe was not alarmed.

Again ſhe gazed around her. She diſcovered many noble veſtals, whoſe looks

looks and converſation belied the timid graces of their youth. And while the "loud laugh beſpoke the vacant mind," ſhe heard the buzzing ſwarms of thronging inſects mingling in tones of unbounded admiration!—She heſitated—ſhe was but half decided.

The hours flew ſwiftly, for they were winged by diſſipation, in the form of love. Her companion urged his precepts by the pernicious doctrines of example. He aſſured her that, having already "ſacrificed her reputation——"

She ſtarted.

He repeated the words; he told her that the world would give her little praiſe for prudence, after the purity of her fame had been ſo confeſſedly contaminated. "Your propriety," ſaid he, with an inſulting ſmile, "will only be conſidered as a proof of your inſignificance; and the over ſcrupulous de-

licacy of your mind will merely draw on you the imputation of falſe pride." While he ſpoke lord Francis Sherville paſſed them; on his arm leant lady Penelope Pryer. Mrs. Morley's heart beat high; her whole frame trembled. She was decided.

The tempter who for that night aſſumed the name of guardian, obſerved the emotions ſtruggling in her boſom. "I know you love lord Francis," ſaid he; "but he is an univerſal idolator."

"I fear he is!" ſighed Mrs. Morley.

"You ill beſtow your affections on ſuch an avowed inconſtant," added her companion. "For he is not only a bankrupt in character, but in fortune."

"O Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Morley; "what do you tell me? I conjure you to have a care; the poverty of lord Francis may, to my mind, convey an intereſt, a ſympathy, that would prove

prove fatal." Again lord Francis paſſed them, alone; Mrs. Morley's voice arreſted his attention. He turned ſhort, and followed her. He was unmaſked. She quitted the Rotunda to avoid him; he purſued, and in the firſt anti-room, while her companion went in ſearch of his carriage, lord Francis addreſſed her.

"Hear me but a moment," ſaid he, with agitation. "The perſon under whoſe protection I now find you, is unworthy of ſuch an honour. He has already boaſted of his triumph, publicly boaſted; and, though you are by the world conſidered as his miſtreſs, I ſtill believe he is a ſlanderer."

"You aſtoniſh me!" replied Mrs. Morley. "How ſhall I prove my innocence?"

"By accepting my protection. By this inſtant making your eſcape from the danger that awaits you; you may

rely upon my honour, for you have proved it." While lord Francis was ſpeaking, he led Mrs. Morley imperceptibly acroſs the portico: they entered his carriage, and proceeded towards London.

CHAP. XXXVI.

As they were paſſing through Groſvenor place, the coach axletree breaking, Mrs. Morley was once more alarmed by a new ſpecies of dilemma. With lord Francis's aid ſhe was extricated from the carriage, and was proceeding on foot along the pavement, when her enraged and deſerted lover overtook them.

By one blow he levelled lord Francis to the ground. Mrs. Morley ſhrieked and endeavoured to ſeparate them; but the undaunted champion of her honour, ſnatching a cane from the hand of his ſervant, began to inflict ſuch corpo-

real puniſhment on his aſſailant, as taught him to repent of his raſh and ill-judging violence. The conteſt was, during ſeveral minutes, a ſevere one; for the athletic arm of lord Francis met no trifling oppoſition from the pugiliſtic ſkill of his enraged antagoniſt.

Mrs. Morley, terrified beyond the powers of recollection, concealing her face with her maſk, ran ſwiftly along the pavement. It was juſt day-break, and ſhe reached Hyde Park Corner before ſhe had courage to look back for her encountering knight errands, when ſhe found herſelf detained by the ſtrong graſp of a new companion. Her conſternation was infinite. He held her hand with a determined firmneſs, and, being alſo maſked, ſhe had every thing to apprehend from the violence of his manner.

An

An empty coach paſſing at this moment, Mrs. Morley, with aſtoniſhment, heard her companion ſtop it. "Reſiſt not," ſaid the ſtranger; "for you muſt go with me." She knew the voice, and trembled.

"You are at laſt detected, madam. Your paramour's high rank ſhall not ſhield him from the rigour of the law," ſaid Mr. Morley. "I have been a watchful ſpectator of all that has paſſed during the night. I have never for a moment ceaſed to follow you. I now find that you are no leſs criminal than capricious; and I command, at leaſt, a temporary penance for your folly, while you bear that name which your conduct has ſo branded with diſhonour." Mrs. Morley finding that all remonſtrance would be uſeleſs, conſented to enter the carriage, and Mr. Morley ordered the

coachman to proceed towards an hotel in Pall Mall.

Mr. Morley immediately retired to his chamber, after having locked Martha in an inner apartment. There ſhe was left to ruminate on all that had paſſed; and though ſhe had every proſpect of enduring the tyranny of a jealous huſband, ſhe bleſſed that good genius, which had reſcued her from her libertine lover.

On the following morning an interview, as ſolemn as it was definitive, took place between Martha and Mr. Morley. Weary of the viciſſitudes which ſhe had encountered, and happy to adopt any plan that might at leaſt procure her ſafety from promiſcuous inſult, ſhe conſented to await the deciſion of Mr. Morley's judgment, and the full explanation

nation of her, ſeemingly imprudent, conduct.

A few hours confinement in her chamber had tranquillized her ſpirit, and ſhe began to think even the authority of a wedded ruler far preferable to the miſeries of perpetual adverſity.

Two days had paſſed ſince Mrs. Morley had placed herſelf under the protection of her huſband, when the ſervant of the hotel informed her that Mr. Morley had at dawn-light departed for Derbyſhire, accompanied by a young lady. Her ſurprize was only to be equalled by her chagrin; but on inquiry ſhe found that all demands at the hotel were ſettled; and that a letter had been left for her, incloſing a bank note of thirty pounds, with the following lines:

'I have inveſtigated your conduct,
'and I find that it has been leſs culpable

'than report had made it. Still the 'diſgrace which you have brought upon 'my name, by the profeſſion you have 'choſen, and the ſtrong ſymptoms of 'guilt which attended the birth of your 'darling Fanny, prevent the poſſibility 'of our ever re-uniting. Had there 'been ſufficient proofs of your crimi-'nality a divorce might have ſet us both 'at liberty; but, under the ſtigma of a 'doubtful reputation, I cannot, without 'diſhonouring my family, and injuring 'my moral character, receive you.'

Mrs. Morley read this brief farewel with calmneſs and reſignation. And as ſhe again entered her humble habitation, ſighed an adieu, to every hope of happineſs. She would have returned Mr. Morley the thirty pounds which he left her; but ſhe was involved in many pecuniary embarraſſments, and neceſſity is often the propelling power which

which makes worth and genius endure the inſolence of pride, the vaunted diſplay of vulgar oſtentation, and the regret of owing a ſhort hour of repoſe to the ignorant and unworthy.

CHAP. XXXVII.

A FEW weeks after Mrs. Morley's return to her old lodging ſhe received a letter from the attorney who had undertaken her ſuit againſt the Leadenhead family, informing her that ſhe had loſt her cauſe; and requeſting the immediate payment of fifty pounds, the coſts of her unſucceſsful proſecution. Her amazement was infinite, and her diſtreſs was equal to her ſurprize, for by this intelligence her proſpects now became more gloomy than ever.

How to extricate herſelf from the ſharp fangs of legal perſecution, ſhe knew not; though ſhe knew by fatal experience that oppreſſion never fails

to

to follow the oppreſſed. She had ſeen but too many inſtances, where the enlightened and feeling mind was expoſed to the low machinations of empty pride and tyrannical preſumption; and her heart ſhuddered when reflection told her, that ſhe muſt once more ſeek for patronage where the ſweetly ſoothing taſk would be contaminated by the littleneſs of oſtentation.

To her pen ſhe flew for that paſſport, which was the only one ſhe could obtain, to thoſe who by rank and fortune were far removed from the ſorrows which annoyed her. Twelve days of intenſe application produced a ſmall collection of odes, which ſhe neatly copied, and reſolved on dedicating, by permiſſion, to a perſonage of high diſtinction.

She had often heard the marquis of Downlands ſpoken of as the very Mæcenas

cenas of modern times. She therefore doubted not that he would readily patronize the efforts of a female pen, particularly when he was informed that the writer was at that moment placed in the moſt diſtreſſing predicament, unhappy, perſecuted, and unprotected. She wrote to this patron of the Muſes, this guardian of unfriended genius, this modern Mæcenas, this Atlas of Britiſh literature! but, though he had probably heard that a Chatterton had been ſpurned by unfeeling greatneſs; that an Otway had periſhed in miſery; that the inſpired mind of a Collins had been bowed to deſpondency by neglect; that a Savage had been urged on to crimes by the effects of indigence and the frowns of the exalted, her letter remained unanſwered, her application unregarded, while the laws not only of philanthropy,

but

but of *beinſeance*, were violated by his ſilence.

She then addreſſed herſelf to a baronet, whoſe wealth had raiſed his name above the vulgar, but whoſe heart had not taught him to feel for the ſorrows of thoſe whom nature had ennobled. The ſufferings of a woman of talents did not impreſs his mind with any thing like ſympathy; he felt no inclination to dignify his character by an act of generous patronage; or to beſtow any portion of that wealth on an enlightened female, which he did not ſcruple publicly to laviſh on the moſt ignorant, profligate, and mercenary of the ſex.

Mrs. Morley's third trial of Britiſh liberality was made in the feelings of a wealthy Aſiatic; a collection of odes excited little intereſt in a boſom which was proof againſt all the inſpirations of genius and philanthropy. He therefore

begged leave to decline patronizing her works; at the ſame time ſending her a guinea by a domeſtic, with a verbal meſſage, that if ſhe was in diſtreſs ſhe was welcome to it as a preſent. Reſentment rouſed her throbbing heart, and ſhe returned the inſulting tribute, with all the pride of ſcorn and indignation, accompanied by a letter, which *repaid* the obligation.

Her next application was made to a venerable dowager of high rank. The word, Dedication, flattered her ſelf-love, and Mrs. Morley was appointed to wait on her ladyſhip on the following day, and to bring the odes, for the approbation of her patroneſs. With a beating heart ſhe approached the threſhold of that temple where worth and talents were deſtined to pay homage to dulneſs and oſtentation.

The porter who opened the door with ſurly importance demanded her buſineſs.

buſineſs. Mrs. Morley bluſhed and heſitated. "If you are come with a begging letter," ſaid the pride-pampered Cerberus, "you may take my anſwer; my lady never opens them, excepting when they come from her ladyſhip's own relations."

"You miſtake my errand," cried Mrs. Morley ſternly; "I am not a beggar. I have buſineſs of importance with lady Eldercourt."

"Some favour to aſk, I dare ſay," replied the porter; "for I never ſaw you before; what is your name?"

"Morley."

"No ſuch perſon on my lady's viſiting liſt. Perhaps you are a tradeſwoman. You have no chance of ſeeing my lady; ſhe never talks to people of buſineſs."

"I came by appointment," ſaid Mrs. Morley. "Lady Eldercourt will know my

my buſineſs, when my name is announced."

"Indeed! I much doubt it," anſwered the ſaucy varlet: "but you may go to the houſekeeper's room, and ſhe will inquire more about the matter." A liveried coxcomb who had witneſſed this converſation, and whoſe obtruſive looks had diſtreſſed Mrs. Morley while ſhe was ſpeaking, now offered to conduct her to the houſekeeper's apartment; at the ſame time with a ſupercilious ſneer aſſuring her that he was exceſſively delighted in having an opportunity of obliging ſo pretty a woman.

Mrs. Morley, on entering the room, obſerved a luſty, vulgar-looking female ſeated at a breakfaſt-table. Without riſing from her chair, ſhe inquired, "What is your buſineſs with me, child?"

"I came

"I came to wait on lady Eldercourt, reſpecting a ſmall collection of poems."

"O, child!" exclaimed the woman, "you have certainly miſtaken the houſe. My lady never reads! And as to authors, ſhe cannot endure them.—Who could lead you into ſuch an error? If you had but told the porter your buſineſs, he would not have given me the trouble of anſwering you."

"But lady Eldercourt appointed me to wait on her this morning."

"No matter for that," replied the woman, at the ſame time looking Mrs. Morley into confuſion. "My lady appoints a dozen people every forenoon, but never ſees one of them. That toil generally falls to my ſhare; and, God knows, I have enough to do with our troubleſome viſitors."

"I wiſh

"I wiſh to dedicate ſome Odes to her ladyſhip; for I have been informed that ſhe is the patroneſs of the Muſes."

"Of whom?" inquired the houſekeeper earneſtly.

"The Muſes."

"They are not on our viſiting liſt: I cannot ſay that ever I heard of them. Are they noble?"

"Of the moſt exalted nobility!" ſaid Mrs. Morley ſmiling. "They are nine lovely ſiſters."

"And patronized by my lady? Impoſſible!" interrupted the houſekeeper. "Her ladyſhip has too many poor relations of her own to throw away her money upon ſtrangers."

"Indeed!" ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"Aye,

"Aye, aye, child! great people have their plagues as well as little ones. And though my lady is as good as moſt folks, where ſhe takes a liking, ſhe is no better born than myſelf, who am but her houſe-keeper."

"I know nothing of lady Eldercourt's family," ſaid Mrs. Morley: "but I have always heard that ſhe is ſpoken highly of by the *literati*."

"Aye, that is the Italian ſinger, I ſuppoſe, who is ſuch a favourite with my lady. She makes nothing of giving him fifties and hundreds, though many of her own relations are ſtarving." Mrs. Morley ſmiled.

"But high folks are apt to forget themſelves as well as low ones," continued the houſekeeper. "They think that nobody knows them in their new character. They imagine that what is done

done in the drawing-room is not noticed in the ſervants'-hall: but they are mightily miſtaken. We know the birth and parentage of all our viſitors, from the right honourable bar-maid, the ſtrolling actreſs, and the milliner, down to the French opera-dancer and the thief-taker's daughter; and this I will ſay, that none of our ladies or ducheſſes born, are near ſo proud, or give themſelves half ſo many airs, as theſe ſecond-hand nobility. But we know them, notwithſtanding they think to the contrary."

By this time the houſekeeper had finiſhed her fifth cup of tea, and Mrs. Morley's patience was almoſt exhauſted, when lady Eldercourt's *femme de chambre* entered the room.

"I believe," ſaid ſhe, looking conſequentially at Mrs. Morley, "you are the

the young woman whom my lady expects about ſome books or verſes."

"My name is Morley."

"The ſame," replied the lady of the bedchamber. "We ſhall be at leiſure in about twenty minutes, and then we will give you an audience. My lady is at preſent engaged with a poor clergyman, who has brought ſome ſermons to make her melancholy; for I am ſure there is nothing in this world ſhe diſlikes ſo much, except poetry."

Mrs. Morley bluſhed.

"But my lady is very good-natured;" for ſhe knows that people come with their books as a genteel ſort of begging, and ſhe generally pays them handſomely for their trouble. Would you like ſome refreſhment—a cold pheaſant or a glaſs of frontiniac? Pray make no ceremony: moſt likely you are hungry."

Mrs.

Mrs. Morley thanked the lady in waiting, but declined her offer; patiently looking on while ſhe made her ſecond morning meal on the articles ſhe had mentioned, though her own faſt was that day unbroken.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

MRS. Morley now followed the attendant of the bed-chamber to lady Eldercourt's dreſſing-room, where ſhe found her new patroneſs recently riſen, and ſitting at her toilette. Lady Eldercourt was neither lovely nor juvenile: but a flattering deluſion, which is often the repleniſhing glow of life's waning luſtre, frequently told her ſhe was both. Proud ſhe certainly was: but her underſtanding was circumſcribed and her education limited. Lady Eldercourt, with high rank and high opinions, at leaſt as far as they towered above the leſs fortunate, was not born noble; neither did ſhe, by acting nobly, ſupply the deficiency

which Fortune had, till her youth was paſt, forgotten to remedy.

This introductory preamble to the toilette of lady Eldercourt will inform the reader what kind of perſonage Mrs. Morley had to encounter: for though ſhe was of human kind, her conduct was not at all times ſuch as did honour to humanity.

When Mrs. Morley approached her ladyſhip ſhe was buſily employed in ſettling her features into a dignified ſolemnity. The looking-glaſs preſented them before ſhe was conſcious of the reflection it conveyed; while Mrs. Morley ſighed, and anticipated a new ſcene of probation.

"Madam," ſaid the poeteſs, "I have the honour to wait on you, by your ladyſhip's commands, to read ſome poetical trifles which I ſhall be proud to dedicate to your ladyſhip."

"Very

"Very well, child; I ſhall be glad to hear them," cried lady Eldercourt. "I have half an hour's leiſure, and you may begin to read them as ſoon as you pleaſe." Mrs. Morley unfolded the odes; lady Eldercourt, for the firſt time, glanced at her.

"How long have you wrote verſes, child?" inquired her ladyſhip.

"I have always been an admirer of the Muſes."

"They will ſcarcely repay you for your trouble, child. People of faſhion have little time to read. You had better think of ſome other occupation." Mrs. Morley bluſhed, and began to repent of having made the viſit.

"Have you nothing but poetry to depend on?" continued lady Eldercourt. "Writing is very well as an amuſement, but it very rarely pays the expences attending it. 'Tis an idle

trade, child. However, let me hear your verſes. I hope they are intelligible; for really ſome of our modern poetry is a mere jargon of words, without either ſenſe or ſound to make them palatable."

"Your ladyſhip is a competent judge, I dare ſay," cried Mrs. Morley, confuſed and trembling.

"I never read; I only draw my concluſions from report. My *femme de chambre* is an excellent critic, and ſhe tells me that moſt living poets are mere pretenders to the art." The lady of the bed-chamber grew conſequential, and glanced at Mrs. Morley, over her ſhoulder, with the importance of a modern cenſor. She ſighed, and again looked at her odes.

"I hope they are not of a melancholy caſt," ſaid lady Eldercourt; "for I am nervous,

nervous, and cannot bear pathetic ſubjects."

"No, my lady; they are rather allegorical than ſerious."

"I truſt that they are not political. Much poiſon may be concealed beneath the flowers of poeſy." Mrs. Morley half ſmiled.

"Now, child, you may begin. Of courſe you read well?" The odes were again unfolded.

"You may take a ſeat, child: I ſuppoſe you are tired.—Now firſt let me hear the Dedication."

"Madam! the Dedication!"

"The Dedication. That, I underſtand, is the object of your viſit to me, child. I ſhall be glad to hear how you introduce yourſelf."

"The Dedication is not yet written: I did not know whether it was your

ladyſhip's intention to honour my odes with your patronage."

"Then what brought you here, child?"

"The wiſh to read my efforts, and the hope of obtaining your ladyſhip's approbation."

By this time lady Eldercourt had nearly completed her morning toilette, and a loud knocking at the ſtreet door interrupted the converſation. "You muſt retire, child," ſaid her ladyſhip; "I hear company. You muſt wait till I am again at leiſure." Mrs. Morley returned to the houſekeeper's room, accompanied by lady Eldercourt's woman.

As ſoon as they had taken their ſeats, (for the arbitreſs of the decorative department condeſcendingly requeſted that Mrs. Morley would wave all ceremony,) ſhe was again addreſſed. "Have you been

been an authoreſs long? What books have you written?"

"A novel, and ſeveral poetical pieces."

"I don't diſlike novels: though I have a tolerable library of my own; for a vaſt number of writers ſolicit my lady's patronage, and they generally ſend me a ſet of their works bound with elegance, as a paſſport to her favour."

Mrs. Morley underſtood the meaning of this information, and ſmiled.

"Indeed," added the enlightened cenſor, "I am little indebted to their attentions; for if they omit paying me proper reſpect, I always obtain their books free of obligations."

"I do not comprehend you," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"Why," replied the woman, "I always read works that are ſent for my lady's inſpection, and thoſe that I abuſe

are conſigned to my ſhelves; while their authors are compelled to endure an equal ſhare of oblivion."

"Has lady Eldercourt ſo implicit a reliance on your judgment?"

"She has little confidence in her own," replied the critic; "and therefore it is eaſy to control her opinions. Beſides, I am her privy counſellor, her ſecretary, and her *confidante*. I have had a tolerable education, and every body knows that my poor lady was not ſo fortunate as to be born in the higheſt circles."

"Your lady is nevertheleſs fond of books," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"If they are elegantly bound. The outſide of moſt things is the beſt badge of importance with weak minds."

"Lady Eldercourt is conſidered as a woman of taſte," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"That

"That reputation ſhe owes to me, and I liberally transfer the praiſe of it to her milliner. I find my advantage in my generoſity: I have always the firſt faſhions ſent me, gratis."

"Indeed!" ſaid Mrs. Morley. "You are fortunate!"

"It is lady Eldercourt that is indebted to Fortune, in having ſuch a friend," ſaid the preceptreſs. "Her ladyſhip was much neglected in her youth, and is terribly unpoliſhed. I write all her letters, and ſhe paſſes for a ſecond *Sevigny*."

"Aſtoniſhing!" exclaimed Mrs. Morley.

"Not at all," interrupted the female ſecretary: "women of faſhion ſeldom write elegantly. They have other things to do of more importance in the world of diſcernment, and they eaſily get authors to ſcribble for them; for the

poverty of real genius is almoſt proverbial."

Mrs. Morley ſighed deeply.

"We ſee authors waiting every day in our hall, without a dinner," added the *femme de chambre*, "while my lady is giving audience to French dancers, Italian muſicians, fancy-dreſs-makers, and profeſſors of animal magnetiſm. My lady has reſided in a warm climate, and her nervous ſyſtem has been nearly annihilated." She was proceeding, when a meſſage again ſummoned Mrs. Morley to the preſence of her patroneſs.

On entering the drawing-room ſhe ſaw ſeveral perſons of both ſexes. "Now, child," ſaid lady Eldercourt, with a tone of ſelf-importance, "you may read your verſes as ſoon as you pleaſe. Here are ſeveral excellent judges, and ſome ſucceſsful authors." Mrs. Morley's courage began to fail, and

and ſhe felt her face redden deeply, while the inquiſitive eyes of all preſent were fixed upon her. The odes were again unrolled; her hand trembled: ſhe attempted to read; her voice faltered, and ſhe could not articulate a ſingle ſyllable.

"Well, child, when do you mean to begin?" ſaid lady Eldercourt, with a tone of auſterity. "Time is precious, and I am in haſte." At this moment a new trio augmented the circle. Mrs. Morley ſtood like a culprit at the bar of condemnation; her heart throbbed with alarm, while her cheek glowed with reſentment.

"Heavens! what is to be done now?" cried a flippant girl of faſhion, as ſhe entered the room and flew towards the looking-glaſs.

"Only a poeteſs going to read her verſes," replied a male ſprig of nobility.

"I dare ſwear we ſhall be wonderfully entertained!

"From lips like thoſe what precepts fail to move?"

"I do not queſtion it," interrupted a venerable dowager; "for I ſuppoſe ſhe is one of the Julias or Sapphos of the preſent day. I never read their productions without being amuſed beyond meaſure—Poor things!"

"Pray, ma'am, do you write in the newſpapers?" ſaid the young lady who introduced the converſation: "Are you Anna Matilda, or Della Cruſca, or Laura Maria? Comical creatures! they have made me ſhed many a tear, though I never more than half underſtood them."

"I never wrote under either of thoſe ſignatures," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"Well, now, child, begin," interrupted lady Eldercourt: "It is of little importance under what ſignature you write, if you do but write well. Of that we ſhall ſoon judge. Read with an audible voice, and we will all give you our candid opinions." Mrs. Morley opened the firſt Ode

TO THE BLUE-BELL.

BLUE-BELL! how gaily art thou dreſt!
How neat and trim art thou, ſweet flower!
How ſilky is thy azure veſt!
How freſh, to flaunt at morning's hour!
Could'ſt thou but think, I well might ſay,
Thou art as proud in rich array
As lady, blithſome, young, and vain,
Prank'd up with folly and diſdain,
Vaunting her power—
Sweet flower!

BLUE-BELL! O, could'ſt thou but behold
Beſide thee, where a rival reigns,
All deck'd in robe of gloſſy gold,
With ſpeckled crown of ruby ſtains—
Could'ſt

Could'ſt thou but ſee this COWSLIP gay,
Thou would'ſt with envy faint, and ſay,
"Hence from my ſight, plebeian vain!
Nor hope, on this my green domain,
For equal power,
Bold flower!"

Poor rivals! could ye but look round,
On yonder hillock ye would ſee
The NETTLE, with its fangs to wound—
The HEMLOCK, fraught with deſtiny!
On them the ſun its morning beam
Pours in as rich, as bright a ſtream,
As on the faireſt roſe that rears
Its bluſhing brow midſt Nature's tears,
Chilling its power,
Faint flower!

Then why diſpute this wide domain,
Since NATURE knows no partial care?
The nipping blaſt, the pelting rain,
Both will with equal ruin ſhare:
Then what is vain DISTINCTION, ſay,
But the ſhort blaze of ſummer's day?
And what is pomp, or beauty's boaſt?
An empty ſhadow, ſeen and loſt!
Such is thy power,
Vain flower!

An

An awful ſilence followed during ſeveral moments, when a nobleman, of poliſhed and amiable manners, with a conſoling ſmile commended Mrs. Morley's poetical talents in the higheſt terms of liberal panegyric. But he was interrupted by lady Eldercourt, who exclaimed, "Heavens! my lord! can your lordſhip diſgrace your judgment by praiſing ſuch impertinent opinions? For my part, I wonder how the woman could preſume to read ſuch audacious verſes in the preſence of people of rank and title! But you are a poet, my lord, and conſequently an enthuſiaſt."

"Pardon me, lady Eldercourt," replied the liberal nobleman: "you judge too haſtily. The lines are truly poetical, and the moral leſſon which they teach is excellent."

"Who will condeſcend to be taught by an obſcure ſcribbler?" interrupted

the patroneſs of literature. "I thought the woman wanted protection: but I find that ſhe wiſhes rather to admoniſh than to be ſanctioned. I could have pitied her obſcurity, but I cannot pardon her preſumption."

"Obſcure ſhe cannot be," ſaid the nobleman, "while ſhe has ſuch talents to ſupport her." Mrs. Morley, unconſcious of meriting ſuch praiſe, was overwhelmed with gratitude and confuſion. She was retiring, when the young female auditor whiſpered lady Eldercourt, "I have ſeen her before—ſhe is a ſtrolling actreſs!"

"Impoſſible!" exclaimed one.

"I thought ſhe was ſomething of the kind," ſaid another.

"Let us deſire her to act a ſcene," cried a third, "Something in tragedy, to make us laugh."

"It

"It is evident ſhe has been uſed to appear in public," remarked a fourth.

"By her uncommon boldneſs," whiſpered a fifth.

Again Mrs. Morley, nearly overcome by confuſion, retreated towards the door, when lady Eldercourt rang the bell. A ſervant entered the room: "Here," ſaid her ladyſhip, "get change for this bank-note; I want to give this young woman five guineas."

Mrs. Morley's pulſe beat high: her proud heart throbbed with indignation. She ſunk upon the carpet, and fainted.

The whole party retired, excepting the noble poet, who, with the aid of lady Eldercourt's *femme de chambre*, reſtored Mrs. Morley, and in his own carriage conducted her ſafely to her lodgings.

CHAP. XXIX.

READER, if you have had patience and curioſity ſufficient to accompany the perſecuted Martha through her varying ſcenes of unmerited ſuffering, you will be able to form ſome idea of the perplexities, pains, and humiliations which the children of Genius are deſtined to encounter: you will perceive, that of all the occupations which induſtry can purſue, thoſe of literary toil are the moſt fatiguing. That which ſeems to the vacant eye a mere playful amuſement, is in reality an Herculean labour; and to compoſe a tolerable work is ſo difficult a taſk, that the faſtidiouſly ſevere ſhould make the trial before they preſume

preſume to condemn even the humbleſt effort of imagination.

Mrs. Morley was completely diſcomfited by the cold reception ſhe had experienced at the counteſs of Eldercourt's. She forgot the motive which had procured for her the diſplay of protection, and her ſelf-love had taught her to place the proſpect to the account of her own merit, which merely originated in the vanity of her patroneſs.

Reduced once more to ſeek a livelihood, by this unexpected dilemma, Mrs. Morley applied to her city friend, the benevolent Mr. Dodſon, with whom, during the viciſſitudes of fortune, ſhe had kept up a regular correſpondence.

Again his philanthropic heart was open to her ſolicitation. With his aſſiſtance ſhe obtained a new aſylum, as companion to the daughter of an eminent

nent banker. The young lady was heireſs to a ſplendid fortune, of a delicate conſtitution, and by her phyſicians ordered to the Spa of Germany. Mrs. Morley accepted the ſituation, and Mr. Dodſon promiſed without delay to inveſtigate and arrange the lawyer's demand, and to take every opportunity of ſuccouring the miſguided Julia.

Mrs. Morley found her new patroneſs amiable and intereſting, but unfortunately under the ſtern authority of an inſolent ſtep-mother. Mrs. Gerard had been the favourite of her huſband's affections during his firſt wife's days: ſhe had long ſet decency and morality at defiance by publicly taking that place and uſurping that name which belonged to a more worthy object. She had been, a few days before, made an honeſt woman: but unfortunately the accommodating powers of a prieſt did not extend

tend to the capability of making her a good one. She was envious, haughty, obtruſive, ill-natured, vain, and oſtentatious: ſo elated by the new rank which ſhe held in ſociety, that by her preſuming arrogance ſhe perpetually reminded the world of that from which ſhe had been recently removed. Her extravagance was only to be equalled by her vanity; and her tyranny, which was unblushingly exerciſed over her wedded benefactor, plainly evinced that ſhe had neither gratitude nor decency; while he was an object of univerſal pity and contempt, and his wife an example that the little mind cannot riſe upon the wings of Time, even though his feet are placed on the ſwift wheel of Fortune.

Mrs. Gerard was uniformly ſevere on all who did not pay obſequious homage to her newly-acquired dignities. But unfortu-

unfortunately the world cannot forget what has once been the theme of public notoriety. Mrs. Gerard's conduct had been the ſubject of univerſal reprobation; and the grave which hid the remains of her predeceſſor did not, at the ſame time, conſign her follies to oblivion. Had ſhe choſen the ſtill paths of life, Time might have ſoftened the ſtern frown of reflecting indignation: but Mrs. Gerard braved the broad eye of day, and vainly hoped that the luſtre of her new-born honours would ſo dazzle the eye of obſervation, that in their full ſplendour her faults would be inviſible. She was proud and imperious; and if the ſeverity of her mind knew any diſcrimination, it was that of feeling a decided and more than common hatred towards the withering but accompliſhed Sophia.

Mrs.

Mrs. Gerard had long witneſſed Sophia's power over the mind of her father, and her deep regret for the loſs of her heart-broken mother. Mr. Gerard had married this ſecond wife from a point of intereſt as well as honour; having beſtowed on her a large portion of his fortune, and entered into engagements to forfeit a conſiderable ſum in caſe he did not make her his legal aſſociate, as ſoon as his firſt alliance ſhould be diſſolved by inevitable deſtiny. The only obſtacle, therefore, to her power over the actions and fortune of her huſband was his fondneſs for Sophia, who was doubly hateful to Mrs. Gerard—firſt, becauſe ſhe was expected to ſhare an equal portion of her father's property; and ſecondly, becauſe ſhe was a living memento of

his

his folly; being extremely pretty, and a very ſtriking reſemblance of her mother.

Mrs. Morley hoped, in her new ſtate of probation, to enjoy ſome ſhare of domeſtic felicity: but her hopes had ever been deluſive, and her proſpects viſionary. On her preſenting herſelf before the ſtep-mother of her lovely pupil, a mutual conſternation at the ſame moment evinced effects of a different nature, though equally diſtreſſing to both parties; for in the perſon of Mrs. Gerard ſhe inſtantly recognized the faſtidious traveller, whoſe ſcrupulous delicacy could not permit a ſtrolling actreſs to become her aſſociate even for a few hours, though ſhe had been the object, for many years, of an illicit attachment.

Mrs.

Mrs. Gerard exerted her utmoſt art to prevent Mrs. Morley's becoming an inmate of her houſe: but Mr. Dodſon's power being likewiſe infinite, with all her ſuppoſed imperfections on her head, ſhe was eſtabliſhed as governeſs and companion to the amiable Sophia. The refinement of this young perſon's mind had long excluded her from the ſociety of her high-bearing ſtep-mother; and as the pupil and the preceptreſs were equally the reverſe of their domineering duenna, the ſeparation was only productive of augmented felicity: for while Mrs. Gerard was daily occupied in ſearching for ſociety, in obtruding her gaudy vulgarity on thoſe who received her more to wonder than to admire—who were either influenced by her huſband or intimidated by her effrontery,

frontery, Mrs. Morley and Sophia enjoyed the ſober pleaſures of congenial ſorrows, even amidſt the toils of mental cultivation.

CHAP. XL.

MRS. MORLEY had only paſſed a few months in Mr. Gerard's family when, after a ſhort illneſs, he expired, leaving, excepting a ſmall annuity to Mrs. Gerard, his whole fortune to Sophia during her life; and at her deceaſe, if ſhe ſhould die unmarried, to the heirs or relatives of his ſecond union. Mrs. Gerard was diſappointed almoſt beyond her patience at what ſhe thought a proof of unjuſt and barbarous neglect: but being ſhrewd, though illiterate, being taught in the ſchool of intereſted duplicity, having long fawned where ſhe could not love, and flattered where ſhe did not eſteem, ſhe employed all her ma-

chinations to counteract the purpoſe of her ungrateful huſband.

During this interval Mr. Dodſon had completely inveſtigated the lawyer's bill of coſts, and to his utter aſtoniſhment diſcovered that the cauſe had never been brought into a court of juſtice. He had threatened to expoſe and to puniſh the impoſtor; who, fearful of the conſequences which would attend his trial, quitted his native county, and ſought concealment in the buſtle of the metropolis—the only ſafe retreat for villany and deception.

Mrs. Gerard, who was indefatigable in her project of revenge, was a diſtant relation of the deſpicable Snatchem. She conſulted him on the poſſibility of defeating her late huſband's purpoſe, and a plan was ſhortly after concerted for

for their mutual advantage; upon condition that if he ſucceeded, the hand of Mrs. Gerard ſhould be the reward of his iniquity.

CHAP. XLI.

EVERY thing was prepared for Miſs Gerard's journey to Spa, when one evening, returning from the family ſeat in Eſſex, with no companion but Mrs. Morley, the chaiſe was ſuddenly overtaken by four men with crape on their faces, who, uttering the moſt horrid imprecations, commanded them to ſtop. Sophia was near fainting with terror, when one of the villains demanded which was Miſs Gerard. The duſk of twilight prevented their ſeeing into the carriage; and Mrs. Morley, inſtantly ſuſpecting ſome plot for the deſtruction of her friend, readily anſwered that ſhe was the perſon.

By

By this time Sophia had fainted. Mrs. Morley, whoſe reſolution was equal to her friendſhip, was ordered to quit the carriage. She obeyed, and in a moment was placed on a pillion behind a ruffian, whoſe horſe ſtood by the road ſide; a cord was faſtened round her waiſt, and held by her conductor, who ſet out full ſpeed on the road leading from London.

As no attempt had been made upon property, Mrs. Morley naturally concluded that the perſon of Miſs Gerard was the object of the outrage; and that as ſoon as the villains ſhould diſcover their miſtake ſhe would be again ſet at liberty.

They continued galloping ſome time, when the rider ſuddenly ſtopped at a large old-faſhioned houſe near the termination of a narrow lane. They alighted. Mrs. Morley was led into

the hall, and, without a ſyllable being uttered, conſigned to the care of an elderly gentlewoman. Lights being brought, the female quitted the room; and a young man, whoſe dreſs beſpoke ſomething above the middle claſſes of ſociety, approached Mrs. Morley.

Her terror now became ſcarcely ſupportable. Her companion perceived the fluttering agitation of her boſom, and taking her hand, endeavoured to conſole her. She withdrew it haſtily. He ſmiled, and attempted to ſalute her. She roſe to quit the room: he prevented her departure. She ſhrieked, and in a moment two ſtout fellows entered with a waiſtcoat of coercion. Mrs. Morley now diſcovered that ſhe was in a private mad-houſe.

The louder ſhe ſhrieked, the more ſhe was inſulted. Her arms were confined; her diſtreſs was taunted by menaces

naces and grimaces. She was compelled to ſwallow the moſt nauſeous medicines, and informed that unleſs ſhe remained tranquil, a more rigid proceſs would be deemed abſolutely neceſſary. The night paſſed tediouſly. Mrs. Morley requeſted that ſhe might be permitted, on the following morning, to have a book for her amuſement. After a long conſultation with the phyſician of the houſehold, it was agreed that a book might be read, without any peril to the patient.

A novel was preſented. It was the ſixth edition of her own work, for which the purchaſer had paid her ten pounds. Her chagrin was conſiderably augmented, and ſhe threw the book on the ground in an agony of vexation. Another conſultation was held, and Mrs. Morley was pronouced to be in

the moſt decided ſtate of raving inſanity.

She was hurried into a ſtrong room, where the phyſician of the houſehold endeavoured to ſoothe her by inſulting familiarities. She ſhrieked: ſhe was menaced, taunted, and commanded to be ſilent. She requeſted to have the book which had ſo ſtrongly influenced her feelings. "It is mine," ſaid ſhe; "I wrote it."

"Poor thing!" ſighed one of the keepers, "ſhe thinks that ſhe can make books. She is not the only crazy woman who fancies herſelf an authoreſs. I have ſeen many ſince I firſt took up my buſineſs."

"I tell you that I compoſed every line of it," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"Very well," cried the compaſſionate attendant; "then compoſe your mind; that

that will do you more good than all the novels in the world."

"Six editions for ten pounds!" ſaid Mrs. Morley, raiſing her eyes towards heaven.

"We don't ſell books, God bleſs you, my dear ma'am!" ſaid the nurſe; "we only comfort the afflicted."

"Periſh ſuch comfort!" exclaimed Mrs. Morley. "You ſhall anſwer for this outrage, if there be juſtice or humanity in Britain."

The doctor now again commanded her to be ſilent. "You will diſturb the whole family!" ſaid he. "The houſe is full of perſons of diſtinction, who are placed here by their relations to be happy and unmoleſted."

"To be driven frantic," cried Mrs. Morley. "You take them under your protection to taunt them into madneſs!"

The doctor now whiſpered to one of his keepers that the buſineſs would not do. "This woman is in her ſenſes, and will ruin our houſe if ever ſhe ſhould obtain her liberty. Perhaps ſhe has friends."

"I have an huſband," interrupted Mrs. Morley; "and though he is unkind and cruel, he will avenge this outrage."

"A huſband! O, then ſhe is mad indeed!" ſaid the doctor. "She is not married: ſhe is heireſs to a large fortune, ſingle, and in the way of her family."

She was now bled, bliſtered, menaced, and tortured, till the irritation of her mind produced all the ſymptoms of a delirious fever. In this ſituation ſhe remained two days; and her returning ſenſes only diſcovered to her that

that her head had been ſhaved, and her limbs bruiſed even to the privation of the powers of motion.

She had been confined near a fortnight, when it was diſcovered, at midnight, that the houſe had taken fire. The flames raged furiouſly; and as there was no engine within three miles of the ſcene of horror, the deſtruction of the whole fabric was deemed inevitable. Mrs. Morley had been confined in her chamber: but the peril of her ſituation gave her new ſtrength, and ſhe forced the door juſt as the conflagration had reached the ſtair-caſe. All the reſt of the family had eſcaped, excepting a female, whoſe piercing ſhrieks met Mrs. Morley's ear while ſhe was deſcending amidſt the ſmoke which filled the paſſage. She had paſſed the door where the priſoner was left to periſh: ſhe forced

forced the lock, and ſeizing the terrified woman, dragged her from the ſcene of deſolation.

As ſoon as they reached the garden, Mrs. Morley knelt by the ſide of her companion, who was lying ſenſeleſs on the ground. The ſtrong glare of light preſented her features: they were pale and ghaſtly: but though emaciated, grief-worn, and haggard with the terrors of deſtruction, they were the features of her mother!

This moment of exquiſite delight ſeemed to compenſate for all her former ſufferings. She threw her lacerated arms about her parent's neck, bathed her with tears, kiſſed her pale withered cheek, and would have recalled to her memory her deſerted daughter; but ſorrow and compunction had taken poſſeſſion of her heart, and reaſon was no longer

longer capable of that delight which her neglected child experienced. She was reclined upon the ground, ſupporting her mother's head upon her boſom, and uttering the language of deſpair, prompted by filial, fond affection, when a traveller, who had ſeen the conflagration at ſome diſtance, ſtopped his carriage.

The ſhrieks of women, in ſuch a ſcene of peril, awakened all the feelings of the traveller's ſoul. He flew to their aſſiſtance; and Mrs. Morley, on raiſing her eyes with the wildneſs of diſtraction, beheld lord Francis Sherville.

But the change in Mrs. Morley's appearance preſented her to his gaze as an entire ſtranger. He aſſiſted her in raiſing her mother from the ground, and in a few moments they

conveyed her to his carriage. The ſtupor of deſpair prevented Mrs. Morley's uttering another ſyllable till they reached London.

CHAP. XLII.

By the time that they arrived in Harley-ſtreet it was day-break; and lord Francis, at the firſt glimpſe of light, recognized the pallid countenance and emaciated form of his adored Martha. It is impoſſible to deſcribe the contending emotions of ſorrow, aſtoniſhment, and pity which ſtruggled in his breaſt while he contemplated the object of his his affections, ſo exhauſted, ſo changed, ſo afflicted. A thouſand dreadful ideas poſſeſſed his mind; while he naturally concluded that the loſs of reaſon had been the origin of her confinement and its conſequent ſufferings. He knew not how to addreſs her. His countenance was

was the expreſſive index of his heart, where all the virtues, all the ſorrows of Mrs. Morley had been indelibly recorded.

As they approached the door, lord Francis, fixing his eyes on the wan countenance of an object at all times dear to him, but rendered more intereſting than ever by her misfortunes, with a ſoothing voice inquired whether ſhe knew him.

She ſmiled, while ſhe ſorrowfully anſwered, "Yes. Can I ever forget you? Can I ceaſe to remember the protector of poor Fanny?"

Lord Francis, conſidering her reply as the effect of a lucid interval, took her hand, and preſſed it on his heart. "Oh! ſuffering angel!" ſaid he, while tears ruſhed into his eyes, "why, why art thou thus expoſed to perſecution? Why do I behold ſuch worth, ſuch ſenſibility,

ſibility, the ſport of ſorrow, while the world is over-run with ignorance and vice? Yet let me hope that you will receive the conſolations of a friend, who loves you."

"Alas!" cried Mrs. Morley with a voice ſcarcely articulate, "I never ſhall again be happy! But of all exiſting beings, from *you* I cannot receive conſolation."

"Why?" inquired lord Francis tenderly.

"Look here!" ſaid Mrs. Morley, burſting into tears, and turning towards her mother; "look at this victim of compunction, and ſhudder while you behold a mortal deprived of reaſon, becauſe ſhe had driven from her boſom an unoffending object!" Her tears prevented her proceeding. She threw her arms about her mother: "O God!" continued ſhe, after a ſhort pauſe, "reſtore

ſtore this dear, repentant ſufferer! Spare her, if only for a few ſhort years, that I may prove my duty, my affection!"

Lord Francis, on the carriage ſtopping at his door, conducted Mrs. Morley and her mother to the drawing-room, where he ordered his houſekeeper to wait on them, and to ſhew them every poſſible attention. After taking ſome refreſhment they retired to a chamber, where Mrs. Morley paſſed the following hour in kneeling by her mother's bed and watching her.

As ſoon as the maniac's exhauſted ſpirit ſunk to reſt, Martha endeavoured to cloſe her eyes, but in vain. The agitations of the laſt twelve hours, the ſight of a dear mother whom ſhe had lamented as in her grave, and whom ſhe found deprived of reaſon, the kindneſs of lord Francis, and the terrors which

which ſhe had encountered at the moment when ſhe ſnatched a parent from the moſt agonizing death, filled her mind with ſuch pleaſing, painful ruminations, that ſleep was a ſtranger to her pillow. The repoſe which her mother experienced, however, compenſated for her own feveriſh inquietude; and while ſhe paſſed the ſucceding noon in watching, ſhe indulged the deluſive hope that the ſleep of a diſordered brain might ſoothe it into ſanity.

Several days elapſed, and Mrs. Morley heard no more of lord Francis, excepting by his almoſt hourly inquiries after hers and her mother's health. All the zeal of attentions ſpringing from the ſoul, all the apparent ſolicitude of a feeling boſom, were exemplified by the conſtant attendance of phyſicians and the family. Mrs. Morley in vain endeavoured to recal the wandering ſenſes

of

of her unhappy mother. She was aſſailed by the tormentor, Conſcience; and all the ſophiſtry of the moſt perſuaſive tongue could not produce one lucid moment, to convince the wretched parent that ſhe was bleſſed with the attentions of her deſerted daughter; till one day, while ſhe was kneeling before her, and bathing her hands with tears, on a ſudden her mother ſhrieked, "My child! my dear dead Martha! An angel come to ſave me!"

The tone of voice, and the diſtracted look which accompanied theſe words, nearly annihilated Mrs. Morley; while with a tremulous voice ſhe replied, "Not dead, but kneeling before you, and imploring you to bleſs her!"

Her mother now fixed her eyes intently on her: "No, no," ſaid ſhe; "I killed my poor Martha—my beſt child—I would not own her! She is

in

in heaven, and I ſhall never ſee her more!" The faint recollection of her paſt ſeverity ſeemed to augment her affliction, and a paroxyſm followed which menaced the moſt fatal conſequences.

During the time that the unhappy maniac had been at lord Francis Sherville's, her ſtate of health had precluded the poſſibility of her being removed with ſafety. The violent emotions which followed her momentary recollection of Mrs. Morley had ſcarcely ſubſided when her wandering fancy again preſented the original cauſe of her derangement. "My poor Martha!" exclaimed the deſponding mother: "From her infancy ſhe was never treated kindly: her father did not love her! But they are now together, never again to be ſeparated—all are alike in heaven!" She then inquired after

after her ungrateful Julia. "She placed me in a priſon, to be tortured, to be murdered!" ſaid ſhe. "I held her faſt, but ſhe threw me from her arms! I ſhall never trouble her again!"

The tone of voice and look which accompanied theſe words convinced Mrs. Morley that the powers of recollection were not wholly annihilated. The mental faculties were ſhaken, but not overturned. She knew her neglected daughter; ſhe remembered the unfeeling Julia. The breaking heart yet throbbed in uniſon with the diſordered brain, and the ſorrows of the former were by memory imprinted on the latter. Hers was the moſt agonizing ſpecies of inſanity; for reaſon had juſt left ſufficient powers of reflection to remind her, by inceſſant pangs, of the origin of her calamity.

Mrs.

Mrs. Morley, ſince the hour that ſhe heard of Julia's ſeparation from her huſband, had never failed to trace her through all the labyrinths of her deſtiny. She had from time to time ſecretly beſtowed on her ſuch ſmall ſums as her induſtry provided, with the hope that, by ſcreening her from the miſery of pecuniary temptation, ſhe ſhould alſo ſhield her from the ſhame of public degradation: but Julia's mind required not the all-powerful plea of poverty, the ſtimulating demon Want, to propel her ſteps where profligate debaſement aſſumed the maſk of pleaſure: ſhe had not been driven to indiſcretion by thoſe taunting miſchiefs, pride and adverſity: affluence had been her companion from her earlieſt days; a parent's houſe, a parent's boſom, were her ſafeguards. She had ſtill that houſe, that friend to ſolace her: ſhe was not driven

to wander on the mazy paths of perilous attraction unſhielded, and oppreſſed by a prejudging world.

Mrs. Morley, dreading the fatal termination of her mother's illneſs, diſpatched a letter to her ſiſter, informing her of what had paſſed, and requeſting to ſee her, without delay, in Harley-ſtreet. She informed her that their parent was in a ſituation hopeleſs, and that perhaps a few days would cloſe her ſcene of mortal miſery. In leſs than an hour the ſervant returned with an anſwer, that ſince Mrs. Morley had thought fit to remove her mother from that houſe of ſecurity in which Julia had placed her—

"Julia!" exclaimed Mrs. Morley, (for ſhe could not proceed,) "did Julia place her parent, her doating parent, in ſuch an habitation?" After a pauſe, which

which was marked by a ſhuddering of horror, ſhe continued to read the letter. It added, that Julia ſhould "take care to prevent any artifice being practiſed which might operate to her prejudice; for that the will of her mother was in her poſſeſſion, which was ſigned when ſhe was in her ſenſes."—She reminded Martha alſo, "that the deed of a maniac would not prove valid;" and concluded her infernal epiſtle by informing Mrs. Morley, that ſhe could not think of viſiting any part of her family under the roof of ſuch a perſon as lord Francis Sherville.

Martha was almoſt frantic. She knelt before her dying mother, and in mute deſpair beheld her altered features. They were already fixed in death; her eyes had loſt their luſtre, her lip was parched and colourleſs; and in

a few moments her laſt ſigh proclaimed the termination of every earthly ſuffering. Mrs. Morley's ſhrieks brought lord Francis to the chamber. He bore her from the ſcene of unutterable anguiſh; and by every gentle, kind attention, reſtored her nearly palſied ſenſes.

On the following day lord Francis entreated that Mrs. Morley would indulge him in the taſk of ſolacing her grief, by reading to her, and by his converſation. It was at this intereſting moment that he confeſſed a cheriſhed and undeviating paſſion; that he had ſeen Mrs. Morley at Bath previous to her marriage, and had diſcloſed his intentions of making her the offer of his hand in confidence to lady Penelope Pryer, who diſſuaded him from his purpoſe by an aſſurance that ſhe was engaged to Mr. Morley. Still he could not conquer

the

the affection of his heart; and having been informed by Julia that Mr. Morley had departed for the continent ſhortly after their marriage, he reſolved on ſecluding himſelf in the neighbourhood of the family manſion, with the hope of finding a favourable opportunity of ſpeaking to her.

Mrs. Morley recollected the ſtory of Mrs. Sedgley, and ſhuddered.

Lady Penelope was ſtill the confidante of his proceedings, and by her concerted plan with ſir Lionel, lord Francis was introduced at Morley-houſe. Julia readily became a confederate in the miſchief, becauſe ſhe had her deſigns alſo: but they were on the heart of Mr. Morley; which circumſtances propelled lady Pen to take an active part in the confederacy; for ſhe hoped that, by promoting an attach-

ment between Julia and Mr. Morley, ſhe ſhould wholly deſtroy any remaining parti lity which might be entertained for her by ſir Lionel Beacon.

CHAP. XLIII.

LORD FRANCIS having candidly avowed the whole ſeries of machinations, with noble and ingenuous pride confeſſed himſelf her lover: but at the ſame time he conjured her to believe that his ſenſe of her virtues would ever ſhield her from a diſhonourable motive. "Your diſtreſſes," ſaid he, "your ſenſibility, awaken all the purer feelings of my ſoul. But deſtiny having placed you under my protection, you ſhall find it a ſafe and ſacred ſhelter from every ſpecies of perſecution. Yet as calumny is lynx-eyed, and as I value your reputation far more than I ſhould enjoy

the triumphs of a boyiſh vanity, I will not remain under the roof while you condeſcend to acknowledge it as your aſylum. This night I will find a lodging, where I ſhall remain as long as you will honour my home by calling it your own."

The generoſity of lord Francis's conduct penetrated Mrs. Morley's heart, and almoſt ſtaggered her belief reſpecting the authenticity of Mrs. Sedgley's ſtory: ſhe could ſcarcely ſuppoſe it poſſible that a ſoul ſo nobly philanthropic would have debaſed itſelf by an action ſo unworthy; and yet the circumſtances which had tranſpired were ſo ſtrongly calculated to corroborate his guilt, that even the humanity of his behaviour towards her, by appearing like aſſumed virtue, tended only to brand him with hypocriſy.

"Ah,"

"Ah, my lord!" ſaid Mrs. Morley with a ſigh, "had you been always thus kind, thus generous——" ſhe heſitated.

"Go on," cried lord Francis: "I intreat you, if you think that I have ever deviated from feeling or humanity, I conjure you to accuſe me."

"My lord, I have no right."

"You have a right," interrupted lord Francis. "You command my affections, and I only wiſh to prove them worthy of your acceptance."

"Not excluſively," ſaid Mrs. Morley: "there is another object to whom you owe at leaſt ſome ſhare of tenderneſs."

"Another object!" repeated lord Francis, changing colour.

"A ſuffering, amiable woman! an involuntary offender! a widowed wife!

a deſerted mother!" Lord Francis ſtarted, and turned pale.

"I comprehend you," ſaid he, with a tremulous voice: "but I can never ſee her more."

"Oh, do not utter ſo barbarous a ſentence!" interrupted Martha, taking his hand, and holding it between her's. Let me be the mediator; let me plead for the unhappy wanderer!" Lord Francis held his handkerchief before his eyes; but the convulſive movement of his lip diſcovered his emotion.

"You relent—you feel! You are again the angel that I thought you!" ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"I cannot—indeed, Mrs. Morley, I cannot liſten to you," ſaid lord Francis. "My mind has long been ſtruggling betwixt pride and pity."

"Think

"Think how amiable the object is for whom I am pleading!"

"I know it all—I know her worth, her claims on my affection; yet—"

"Ah! why will you ſuffer an intervening thought to ſever you from ſuch a being!" interrupted Mrs. Morley.

"I will not! I cannot hear you!" replied lord Francis. "I could not bear the thought of a reconciliation! My ſoul ſhudders! A revolutionary marriage, followed by debaſement which places her beneath the moſt abject infamy!"

"She is innocent—indeed ſhe is innocent!"

"Impoſſible!" cried lord Francis. "Proofs are too ſtrong againſt her. The miſtreſs of a ſanguinary monſter! Name her no more!"

"Think how ſeverely ſhe has ſuffered; and if your heart be not dead to

every feeling of humanity, let me awaken all its ſenſibility for the unhappy, the deſerted parent of the infant Fanny—the innocent that never has offended."

Lord Francis was overwhelmed. He tore himſelf from Mrs. Morley's hold, and darted out of the apartment.

This converſation convinced Mrs. Morley that ſhe had not been miſtaken reſpecting the origin of her little *protegée*. The warm affection which ſhe felt for Mrs. Sedgley only tended to excite emotions of reſentment towards lord Francis; yet ſo magically was her heart intereſted in his favour, that the conflict betwixt admiration and abhorrence was painfully perplexing. At all events ſhe reſolved on ſeeing the unkind lord Francis no more; ſhe therefore wrote a ſhort letter, thanking him for his generous attentions to her and to her mother,

and

and on the ſame night quitted Harley-ſtreet; once more requeſting an aſylum under the hoſpitable roof of her city protector, the liberal Mr. Dodſon.

CHAP. XLIV.

WITH the aid of Mr. Dodſon Martha arranged the laſt ſolemn and ſacred offices of filial duty. The body was removed with funeral pomp to the family ſeat in Kent, where only a few weeks before Mr. Popkins had alſo paid the great debt of nature. Martha attended the gloomy cavalcade: but what was her ſurprize, when on arriving at the park-lodge ſhe was refuſed admittance, by order of her unnatural ſiſter, who had taken poſſeſſion of the houſe according to the will of her departed mother.

Mrs. Morley returned to London, and immediately ſet out in ſearch of her friend Miſs Gerard.

On

On inquiry ſhe found that ſhe had departed for Spa, after eluding the vigilance of her fiend-like ſtep-mother, by the aid of Mr. Dodſon. She alſo heard, that various advertiſements, offering a large reward, had been in the ſeveral diurnal prints, for the diſcovery of Mrs. Morley's retreat. She conſulted her humane monitor Mr. Dodſon, who adviſed her to follow Sophia to Germany; and liberally provided her with money, for the expences of her journey. On inveſtigating the laſt will of her deceaſed mother, ſhe found that twenty thouſand pounds had been left to Julia; and only ten guineas to her, to buy decent and neceſſary mourning. She endeavoured to obtain an interview with her ſiſter previous to her departure for the continent; but ſhe was informed that, in conſequence of her mother's legacy, the Leadenhead family had

had propoſed terms of reconciliation, provided Julia never degraded the conſequence of the name, by acknowledging the vagabond Mrs. Morley.

The reader will perhaps be anxious to know, during this lapſe of time, what became of Mr. Morley. He had ſecluded himſelf entirely at the family manſion; regularly attending the duties of religion, and uniformly preaching the importance of piety and benevolence. The ſanctity of his manners beſpoke the moſt unexampled virtues. He was the ſternly reproving moraliſt; the village cenſor; the promulgator of Chriſtian charity; and the unequalled example of candour, honour, and humanity. The labour of his life was that of obtaining a reputation, which might, when the grave cloſed upon his efforts, enſure the applauſe and admiration of poſterity.

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The paſt conduct of his wife had been hoſtile to all his profeſſed ideas of propriety: ſhe had avowed her opinions without reſerve: ſhe had been neglectful of ſacred duties; familiar with the humbler orders of ſociety; enthuſiaſtically attached to unexalted merit; and uniformly eager to exerciſe her will, even in defiance of an huſband's authority. All and each of theſe propenſities were by Mr. Morley deemed inimical to ſocial and domeſtic happineſs. He married Martha with the hope of controlling all her actions: he did not reflect that the ingenuous and liberal mind intuitively reſiſts oppreſſion; nor that the huſband who would wiſely govern, muſt hold the rein with a yielding, gentle hand, or he will find the effort both painful and deſtructive.

Mrs. Morley, with one female ſervant, arrived at Spa without any marvellous

vellous adventure. They had travelled without oſtentation, and they had conſequently been neither cheated nor moleſted. On ſtopping near the barrier they inquired after an Engliſh lady of the name of Gerard, and were informed that only a few days before her corpſe had ſet out for England. Mrs. Morley's grief was ſincere, as her chagrin was poignant. Alone, in a ſtrange country, with only one companion and that a foreigner, ſhe was perplexed almoſt to deſperation.

The carriage arrived at a ſpacious hotel, and the travellers deſcended: it was late in the evening; and mademoiſelle Joſephene, her *companion du voyage*, requeſted permiſſion to retire to reſt, being fatigued with her long journey. Mrs. Morley readily acquieſced in her wiſh; and, after a ſhort ſupper, haſtened alſo to her chamber.

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She ſlept but little; her ruminations were of the moſt ſombre caſt, and her regret was no leſs ſincere than natural. It was ſun-riſe before ſhe had even ſlumbered; when, weary with inceſſant thought, ſhe fell into a deep ſleep, which laſted till near noon. On inquiring after her *femme de chambre*, ſhe was informed that mademoiſelle had quitted Spa the preceding evening, taking with her the whole of their luggage, not even leaving Mrs. Morley a ſingle change of habiliments.

This event ſeemed the climax of her vexations; and ſhe was ſtanding near the balcony of her apartment when a beautiful and elegant female, in company with two others, paſſed the window. She inſtantly, by her natural and unaffected manners, knew her to be an Engliſhwoman; and on inquiry ſhe found that it was the amiable and accompliſhed

compliſhed Georgina, ducheſs of Chatſworth.

Mrs. Morley's heart bounded with ecſtaſy; for what heart that feels the preſſure of ſorrow does not bound at the name of this enchanting woman? Who that has ſeen her ſmile, that has heard her voice, can forbear to own the magic of their power, where they ſoothe the unhappy, or delight the diſcerning?

A ſhort note was diſpatched, merely ſaying, that an Engliſhwoman was unprotected and unhappy. The ducheſs was not ſlow in anſwering ſuch an intimation; for before the meſſenger could deliver her words, ſhe entered Mrs. Morley's apartment.

Mrs. Morley approached her, not with the mean obſequious bend of ſervile adulation; but if ſhe inclined her form as the ducheſs put forth her hand

to

to raiſe her, it was becauſe ſhe felt that ſpecies of adoration which warms the Perſian's boſom, when he beholds the riſing-ſun, the ſource of all his zeal and all his bleſſings.

CHAP. XLV.

THE ducheſs requeſted that Mrs. Morley would return with her to the hotel de ———, where ſhe immediately preſented her the choice of whatever habiliments her wardrobe afforded. It was near the hour of dinner, and Mrs. Morley was requeſted to remain with the ducheſs. There was a prepoſſeſſing diffidence in Martha's manner, which was at the ſame time blended with an eaſy modeſt grace, that never failed to intereſt the feeling boſom. It cannot therefore aſtoniſh the reader that ſhe made a forcible impreſſion on that of the ducheſs of Chatſworth.

The hour of dinner approached, and Mrs. Morley's ſpirits were conſiderably

revived by the kindneſs of her liberal protectreſs, when the ſervant announced lady Penelope Pryer.

Mrs. Morley's cheek was blanced by this unexpected event. It ſeemed as though lady Pen was created to diffuſe a perpetual cloud over all her proſpects: every corner of the globe appeared to preſent this evil genius; and every hour convinced her mind, that ſhe was born to be the victim of prejudice.

But the ducheſs of Chatſworth was not a being created in the common mould; ſhe could hear and ſhe could feel for the child of perſecution: Mrs. Morley's manners and her artleſs ſtory were ſure paſſports to a ſoul, ſuſtained, inſpired, and ſoftened by the fine wrought energies of virtue and benevolence: ſhe knew that woman was an ill-fated being; that the world was ever ready to condemn, though tardy

to

to inveſtigate; ſhe could diſcriminate betwixt the erring and the vicious; ſhe could by ſoothing the compunctuous pangs of a too credulous boſom, reconcile it to that hope, that conſcious pride, which would in future be its beſt and ſtrongeſt ſafeguard.

Lady Penelope, during dinner, directed many ſidelong glances at the dejected Mrs. Morley; but ſhe ſtudiouſly avoided making any kind of acknowledgment that ſhe had ever before ſeen her; until ſhe had ſatisfied her curioſity, how ſuch a woman could become the aſſociate of the ducheſs of Chatſworth. But the reader muſt be informed, that lady Louiſa Franklin and lord Francis Sherville were the particular friends of her grace; and that part of Mrs. Morley's ſtory, which appertained to little Fanny, was not wholly

enigmatical to the ducheſs of Chatſworth.

The curious lady Pen waited with painful impatience for an opportunity to hear and to be heard fully on the ſubject of Mrs. Morley's extraordinary viſit. She could not conceive how the ducheſs of Chatſworth, a woman of the moſt exemplary conduct, could receive a doubtful character, foſter a ſtranger in a foreign country, and become the avowed patroneſs of one, who had nothing but talents to ſupport her. Lady Penelope was aſtoniſhed at ſuch miſtaken liberality; and thought it a duty incumbent on her to open the eyes of the ducheſs, with an idea that ſhe ſhould at the ſame time cloſe her heart againſt a defenceleſs and innocent ſufferer.

Mrs. Morley's ſituation, during dinner, was perplexing and painful. Every

word that ſhe addreſſed to the ducheſs was liſtened to with more than common avidity by the ambiguous lady Pen. Every time that her grace evinced the attentions of politeneſs and hoſpitality, her ladyſhip ſmiled with a ſarcaſtic meaning, which humbled the pride, though it did not diminiſh the merit of Mrs. Morley. At laſt the *deſſert* was placed upon the table, and the boſom of lady Pen, which was burſting to find vent for its ſenſations, began to heave with more freedom, becauſe it anticipated the ſpeedy humiliation of her victim.

Mrs. Morley was nothing loath, in affording lady Penelope an opportunity to unburthen the load which evidently oppreſſed her. She therefore, ſoon after dinner, quitted the room, and ſtrolling towards the fountain *de la Pouhan*, began to ruminate on the perplexity of her ſituation.

ſituation. She had not wandered long, when ſhe perceived a chaiſe driving furiouſly through the ſtreet; being an Engliſh carriage, it attracted her attention; ſhe obſerved it ſtop at an hotel; when, in a moment, lord Francis and ſir Lionel Beacon deſcended from it. Mrs. Morley would have eſcaped unſeen, but ſhe had not the good fortune to elude the eyes of the baronet. Lord Francis entered the hotel, and ſir Lionel haſtened down the ſtreet in purſuit of Mrs. Morley.

She returned as faſt as her fears would carry her, towards her lodgings; and trembing, flew with the moſt extreme perturbation to her own apartment. The ſight of lord Francis had powerfully affected her, and ſhe burſt into a flood of tears which came to her relief juſt at the moment that ſir Lionel entered the room.

"This is aſtoniſhingly amazing," ſaid the baronet, laughing: "I thought lord Francis had ſome motive for flying to Spa, beyond that of viſiting a ſick ſiſter: though he kept up the joke famouſly, and never even mentioned your being here, during the journey."

"He could not ſpeak of that which he did not know," ſaid Mrs. Morley; "but in order to defeat even the tongue of calumny, I ſhall inſtantly depart—"

"And take me with you," interrupted the baronet.

"Pardon me, ſir Lionel, I ſhould thereby ſet calumny at work upon her favourite topic."

"It would be famous notwithſtanding," replied the baronet, "and would certainly make old Pen amazingly wretched."

"I cannot enter into the modern ſyſtem of tormenting my own ſex," replied

plied Mrs. Morley: "I cannot deſtroy my own reputation, merely for the pleaſure of levelling that of another."

"Aſtoniſhingly fooliſh indeed!" ſaid the baronet. "Pen has had her ſhare of amuſement; and ſhe ſhould give precedence to thoſe who have more pretenſions to celebrity."

"Notoriety would be the more appropriate term," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"Oh! that ſhe will claim unrivalled to the cloſe of the century," ſaid ſir Lionel; "and they will probably end together; no leſs diſtinguiſhed for their ſeries of eventful changes. Pen, like the *anno Domini*, has had her days, and will ſoon be forgotten. Her old friends already begin to forſake her."

"She has one at leaſt that is indulgent," ſaid Mrs. Morley; "and he is certainly the oldeſt."

"Who the devil is he?" cried the baronet; "I ſhould like to know, for the curioſity of the thing."

"Time," replied Mrs. Morley.

"I find him my greateſt torment," ſaid ſir Lionel; "for he is ever before me, and I do not know how to employ him."

"And yet Time is always moving," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"And always tedious," ſighed the baronet. "Nobody knows how to make him gay but old Pen Pryer."

"In return for which he will, when ſhe ſteals to the grave, conſign her to oblivion," cried Mrs. Morley. As ſhe ſpoke the door flew open, and lady Penelope ruſhed into the apartment.

"Monſtrous effrontery!" exclaimed her ladyſhip. Mrs. Morley, with a glance of ineffable contempt, quitted the

the room, and haſtened to find the ducheſs of Chatſworth.

She found her exactly what ſhe had left her; kind, liberal, and unprejudiced. She received Mrs. Morley with the ſame undeſcribable and faſcinating affability, and with the moſt graced ſincerity unfolded all the myſtery of lady Penelope's evident inquietude. Mrs. Morley again aſſured the ducheſs of her innocence, and only requeſted her aid which might enable her, without delay, to ſet out for England.

CHAP. XLVI.

MARTHA's boſom was ſomewhat relieved from its load of anxiety by the ducheſs's kindneſs; yet, had ſhe not known that lord Francis was at Spa, ſhe had commenced her journey with more heartfelt ſatisfaction. The place which contains the object deareſt to our affections ſeems always more delightful than any other; and England had already loſt more than half its attractions, by the diſcovery of the preceding evening. Yet it would have been frenzy not to depart. Every pang of diſappointed hope menaced her in a foreign country, with ſuch an enemy as lady Penelope Pryer. The carriage waited

at

at her door more than an hour, when, with a conſtrained reſolution, ſhe entered it, and with a faultering voice bid the poſtillions proceed towards Liege.

Mrs. Morley had delayed ſetting out till the ſun was more than half way in its diurnal progreſs. In addition to this circumſtance her limited finances only allowed her a pair of horſes, which, faſtened to a heavy German carriage, moved as ſlow as though ſhe had been attending a funeral proceſſion. The evening began to cloſe before ſhe had half accompliſhed her day's route, and at the ſtill gloomy hour of twilight ſhe found herſelf in a ſolitary wood, with no guide or companion but a German poſtillion, who, ſtudying his own convenience more than her ſafety, jogged on, either ſinging or ſmoking, as his fancy dictated.

Night rapidly advanced, and Mrs. Morley's terrors augmented with the deepening gloom that every moment ſhut in the proſpect. She had paſſed the wood, and was now croſſing a wide and barren plain, which preſented neither tree nor hovel, to diverſify the blank ſpace of darkneſs, till the full moon roſe majeſtically, crimſon, and emerging from black clouds, and only rendering the ſcene more melancholy, by preſenting its barren wild expanſe; while the wind whiſtled ſhrilly, and the weary horſes proceeded more tardily than ever.

They had not proceeded half a league, when the poſtillion ſuddenly ſtopped, and informed her that he could go no farther. He added, that the road at about a mile's diſtance was inundated by a deep flood, ſo as to render it impaſſable; that ſhe had her choice either

to remain till morning in her carriage, or to paſs the night in a ſmall poſt-houſe on the heath. Mrs. Morley in vain endeavoured to perſuade her guide to purſue his journey. His horſes were weary; the waters were dangerous to paſs; the night was cold; his hands were nearly frozen; and his pipe extinguiſhed: ſuch perſuaſive and cogent reaſons decided Mrs. Morley's conduct, and ſhe conſented to remain that night at the poſt-houſe.

On entering a dirty room ſhe found the whole family ſinging after ſupper. The appearance of ſuch a traveller cauſed no ſmall commotion; and in a few minutes ſhe was uſhered into a gloomy chamber, where a tolerable repaſt was ſerved; and ſhe once more, by a clear coal-fire, conſidered herſelf in perfect ſafety.

Mrs. Morley now began to reproach herſelf for her reluctance to leave lord Francis; his kindneſs towards her had been unbounded, but the ſtory of Mrs. Sedgley ruſhed into her mind, and while her heart throbbed with gratitude, it alſo ſhuddered at the idea of his paſt conduct: on reflection ſhe beheld lord Francis as the betrayer of her friend, as the deſerter of the unborn Fanny; and at the ſame moment ſhe loved and hated, revered and deteſted the man, whom ſhe conſidered as the moſt faſcinating and moſt dangerous of human beings.

However ſuch a character might ſeem the reverſe of that which lord Francis's conduct towards Mrs. Morley had exemplified, ſhe had juſt cauſe for her concluſions. The handkerchief, with the coronet and initial of his name; his evident diſtreſs on finding the infant; his change of countenance when he firſt

ſaw

ſaw it; his inquiries reſpecting the mother; his knowledge of her hand-writing; his conſequent determination to adopt it as his own; and her laſt converſation with him in Harley ſtreet; all confirmed her ſuſpicions too ſtrongly, to leave even a ſhadow of ſcepticiſm.

Mrs. Morley was little inclined to ſleep; and the family in the room beneath her chamber continued ſinging till near midnight. Her ſoul was deeply troubled by a variety of hopes and fears reſpecting her future deſtiny; till ſhe opened her window, when the bleak plain, preſenting to her view a clear moon-light giving a ſolemnity to the ſolitary expanſe, inſpired her mind with a penſive melancholy that ſeemed to harmonize every perturbed ſenſation. The wind blew keen, and the air was chilling; ſhe again cloſed the window, and once more trimming her woodfire, ſought

ſought the ſoft ſolace of the muſe, while the pale moon-beams aided the feeble lamp which ſhed its light upon her table. After a pauſe of a few minutes, alternately looking towards the lonely plain and on the paper before her, ſhe haſtily wrote as follows:

'Tis night, and o'er the barren plain
The weary wand'rer bends his way;
While on his path the ſilv'ry ray
Soothes him with hope that he ſhall ſee
The cloudy ſhadows quickly flee,
And morn return again.

The blaſt blows nipping on his breaſt,
Swift flies the wild and foamy ſtream;
Yet hope preſents a feeble gleam,
That ere day riſes he ſhall cloſe
His weary lids in ſoft repoſe,
And find a bed of reſt.

The moon is dim, by clouds o'ercaſt,
Loud roars the torrent down the vale;
The wand'rer's cheek is cold and pale;
He hears the owl with boding cry
Acroſs the dreary deſert fly;
He ſtarts, and ſtops, aghaſt!

And

And now in haſte, with dumb deſpair,
O'er buſh and brier he bends his way;
No cottage taper's length'ning ray
Gleams faint acroſs the barren heath;
He trembles, ſighs, and thinks of death—
And breathes a timid prayer.

And now the dawn is riſing faſt,
Soft flies the freſh and cheering gale;
The purpling clouds on light wings ſail,
The dew begems the fragrant heath,
No more he ſtarts or thinks of death,
Or ſighs for ſorrows paſt.

So through life's journey we deſcry
Man gay or ſad; he weeps or ſmiles,
As care annoys or hope beguiles;
Then, bleſt are thoſe who wiſely ſay—
"We will enjoy the *preſent* day,
"To-morrow we may DIE!"

CHAP. XLVII.

As ſhe concluded the laſt ſtanza ſhe heard a loud knocking at the door of the poſt-houſe, and a voice calling at the ſame time for aſſiſtance. She opened her window and inquired the meaning of ſo unſeaſonable a viſit. The meſſenger was a peaſant-youth, who informed her, that a carriage had been overturned by the rapidity of the flood, which every moment ſwelled higher in the valley, and that the travellers were in danger of ſpeedy deſtruction.

Mrs. Morley ruſhed from her chamber; and, with the whole family, flew to the ſcene of menaced deſolation. A female

ſemale had, with the aid of the poſtillion, reached the outſide of the carriage, and was ſitting on the hind wheel, while the roaring torrent foamed on every ſide round her perilous ſituation. The moon-light preſented her figure, but her ſhrieks were loſt in the terrific din of the impetuous ſtream. Mrs. Morley was almoſt ſubdued by terror, when the peaſant-boy propoſed wading chin-deep through the water, to aſſiſt the traveller. The poſtillion endeavoured to prevent his attempting ſo dangerous an enterprize, with a muttered remark, that they were ariſtocrats, and conſequently not worth preſerving. The inhumanity of this obſervation only ſerved to ſtimulate the noble-minded peaſant, who inſtantly entered the water, and proceeded towards the carriage.

The ſpectators who ſtood as if petrified with aſtoniſhment at the philanthropy

thropy of the heroic boy, encouraged him with acclamations of applauſe, though no one attempted to follow his example. He reached the carriage, and in a moment was obſerved returning towards the margin of the ſtream; leaving the female in the ſame fearful ſituation as when he had firſt ſeen her. He approached the bank; Mrs. Morley ſtretched forth her hands to receive a bundle which he preſented. She ſnatched it eagerly, it was an infant.

On taking it to her boſom ſhe felt its little arms thrown round her neck, claſping her with all its ſtrength and trembling with terror. The valiant boy again ruſhed into the torrent, followed by a traveller who had the moment before arrived at the ſcene of diſaſter. Mrs. Morley, not doubting but that ſucceſs would attend their enterprize, flew to the poſt-houſe with her little treaſure. She uncovered the infant

infant which was wrapped in a ſatin cloak, and found it as beautiful, as from its dreſs it was evidently high-born. She preſſed it again and again to her beating heart; and was abſorbed in careſſing it, when lord Francis Sherville entered the room, bearing lady Louiſa in his arms, whom he had reſcued from deſtruction. The joy on all ſides was only to be equalled by the conſternation; when lady Louiſa embracing Mrs. Morley, exclaimed, "O, my amiable, my long loſt friend! the infant you have ſaved, is little Fanny!"

Mrs. Morley's ſenſations may be imagined, but cannot be deſcribed. Lady Louiſa was in a ſtate of health that rendered her unequal to the fatigue and terror ſhe had experienced, and ſhe ſhortly after retired to reſt, Mrs. Morley willingly taking charge of Fanny.

At

At breakfaſt, on the following morning, lord Francis informed the friends, that through the buſy information of lady Pen Pryer, he had diſcovered Mrs. Morley's being driven from Spa by the perſecutions of ſir Lionel; and fortunate was the moment when he, in the purſuit of the amiable fugitive, found a loſt and ſuffering ſiſter.

"We will return together," ſaid lord Francis; "Mrs. Morley will not refuſe to be the companion of my drooping Louiſa; where, where can minds be more congenially united?"

"You ſhall not leave me my friend," ſaid lady Louiſa; taking her hand and faintly ſmiling.

"I *will* not," replied Mrs. Morley.

Lord Francis immediately ordered horſes to his carriage, and they all ſet out for Spa, delighted with their unexpected meeting. They travelled ſlowly,

lady

lady Louiſa's ill-ſtate of health rendering her ſcarcely able to bear the fatigue of a carriage; and it was ſome time after ſun-ſet that they arrived.

On the following morning they all haſtened to viſit the ducheſs of Chatſworth, who informed them that lady Penelope and ſir Lionel had departed on the preceding evening. The ducheſs was alſo on the point of ſetting out for England; and lady Louiſa having conſulted her phyſicians, was ordered back to her own country; where her native air and the Briſtol waters were recommended as the moſt promiſing reſtoratives.

CHAP. XLVIII.

ONE evening, previous to their departure, lord Francis accompanied lady Louiſa and Mrs. Morley to the public rooms; where perſons of all ranks and all nations indiſcriminately aſſembled. Several gaming-tables were open in various parts of the ſaloon; and gold ſeemed a mere drug, which every one was eager to obtain, and as eager to get rid of.

Lord Francis, though not by habit a profeſſed gameſter, had not reſolution to reſiſt the temptations around him. He took his ſeat at a faro table, loſt a few guineas, became irritated by his ill-fortune, redoubled his ſtake, and in leſs

leſs than half an hour roſe a loſer of four thouſand pounds. But what was his ſurprize when he was informed that the faro bank was ſupplied by an Engliſhman, and that a credulous and unſuſpecting woman was the dupe of his illegal occupation.

Lord Francis remained two days at Spa wholly for the purpoſe of inveſtigating this buſineſs. Report affirmed that the gameſter had won no leſs than ten thouſand pounds, in the courſe of a few months, in his honourable undertaking; though his creditors in England were left to lament their confidence in one whom public fame and public chronicles had denominated a man of private worth and profeſſional reputation.

On the third day lord Francis made a viſit to the lady, who was ſuppoſed to be the confidential friend of the adventurer. He found her in ſorrow for his

his departure, but wholly a ſtranger to his recent good fortune; for the liberal gameſter had allowed her no participation in the ſmiles of the capricious goddeſs; though he had left her a plentiful ſhare of debts, which had been contracted for their mutual ſupport; and which, by her miſtaken credulity, during a long tried and generous friendſhip, ſhe was totally unable to diſcharge.

Lord Francis, his ſiſter, Mrs. Morley, and little Fanny, now ſet out for England. Lady Louiſa's ſpirits were conſiderably exhilarated by the attentions of her brother, and by the hope that, in caſe of her death, her infant protegée would find a feeling and affectionate protector.

On their arrival in London Mrs. Morley's firſt inquiries were after her ſiſter Julia; but ſhe could obtain no intelligence what was become of her. The Leaden-

Leadenheads had failed in their wiſh for a reconciliation, and the young ſquire now wore the badge of military proweſs, with an *eclat* that did honour to his family. He had twice marched from Norwich to Canterbury, and from Canterbury to Dover; and his feats of valour had even rivalled thoſe of a ſir John Falſtaff, or a major Sturgeon.

Finding every inquiry after Julia ineffectual, Mrs. Morley ſet out for Briſtol with lady Louiſa Franklin and little Fanny. Lord Francis having buſineſs of importance to tranſact in London, made his excuſes and promiſed to follow them. Mrs. Morley's aſſiduities continued to ſolace her ſick friend, till hope at length began to brighten in her eyes, and ſmile upon her cheek, in defiance of the canker-worm which preyed upon her heart. Lady Louiſa loved ſir Lionel Beacon; ſhe knew that beneath a vola-

tile and diſſipated exterior, many virtues were concealed, which only wanted energy to draw them into action. Sir Lionel had been ſpoilt in his education; but the graces of his perſon had been the origin of all his eccentricity. He was like a beautiful caſket, which every eye admired; but which contained a jewel that would, if carefully poliſhed, convert admiration into idolatry. Even his language and his manners were prompted by the capricious Sylph, which holds the rein of faſhion: for there were moments when his converſation was rational and his demeanour grave. He could be what he pleaſed; and he could pleaſe whenever he choſe to be what nature made him. The ſociety of a lady Penelope Pryer was not calculated to ſteal the thorns from this facinating bud of faſhion. That taſk remained for the

the more omnipotent powers of lady Louiſa Franklin.

On their arrival at Bath, in their *route* towards Briſtol they found the ducheſs of Chatſworth the object of univerſal idolatry: all ranks, all ages, from the liſping infant to the feeble veteran, bleſſed her: Mrs. Morley again experienced the moſt liberal attention, and received a requeſt to accompany lady Louiſa on a viſit to the family caſtle. It was ſituated in Derbyſhire, and a promiſe was made that as ſoon as lady Louiſa ſhould be ſufficiently recovered ſhe would, accompanied by her friend, accept the invitation. After two days they proceeded to Briſtol. Lady Louiſa, on her arrival, immediately drank of that ſalubrious ſpring which has been known to counteract even the ravages of mental pain; and in the courſe of three weeks ſhe began to diſplay a

renovation of health which gladdened every beholder.

During this interval lord Francis had been indefatigable in his attentions towards Mrs. Morley. She had by her unaſſuming virtues ſo entirely taken poſſeſſion of his heart, that her dominion was indubitably viſible: while ſhe, with an unconſciouſneſs originating in the diffidence of her nature, conſidered his zeal as the effect of gratitude for her unceaſing devotions to his amiable and ſuffering ſiſter.

Lady Louiſa's health continued to improve daily, and having left off drinking the waters, her phyſician adviſed change of air to complete her recovery. It was now that Mrs. Morley reminded her of her engagement in Derbyſhire, and every arrangement was ſpeedily made for their journey; all parties being

ing equally impatient to enjoy the ſociety of the lovely ducheſs.

On the evening preceding that which was fixed on for their departure, lady Louiſa propoſed going to the theatre. The play was a comedy; and they engaged a ſtage box for the accommodation of their party. On the curtain drawing up, the firſt female that entered was Mrs. Sedgley. Mrs. Morley's heart bounded with joy at the ſight of her old companion in misfortune; but lady Louiſa complained of ſudden indiſpoſition; requeſted lord Francis to call up her carriage, and with feeble ſteps, leaning at the ſame time on Mrs. Morley's arm for ſupport, quitted the theatre.

"Oh, my friend!" ſaid lady Louiſa, as ſoon as ſhe was ſeated in the carriage, "the Mrs. Sedgley whom we juſt now ſaw upon the ſtage, in the character of

lady Townley, is ——" She could ſay no more.

Mrs. Morley had not power to ſpeak, and they returned home without any farther converſation; a thouſand conjectures haunted Martha's brain, and interrupted her ſlumbers. She hoped, feared, pitied, and admired, as her thoughts wandered alternately to little Fanny, lord Francis, Mrs. Sedgley, and lady Louiſa.

CHAP. XLIX.

On the following morning lord Francis roſe early, and requeſted a private interview with Mrs. Morley. Gueſſing the origin of ſuch a meſſage, ſhe readily acquieſced, and as it was her hour of walking before breakfaſt, they proceeded towards the hot-wells, at the foot of the precipice, together.

"I am always intruding on your goodneſs," ſaid lord Francis, "but I know by experience that it is inexhauſtible. I have now a taſk to impoſe, which will, however, require no apology. The ſenſations of your own heart will repay you for the trouble." Mrs. Morley thanked lord Francis for his

good opinion, and he proceeded, not without evident embarraſſment.

"The perſon whom you ſaw laſt night, though perhaps in her preſent ſituation not recognized by you, is the mother of little Fanny. Long, too long, has ſhe been loſt to the world; it ſhall be your office to reſtore her."

"Oh heavens!" cried Mrs. Morley, while tears of ſenſibility, trembling with the trill of joy, gliſtened in her eyes.

"Yes, amiable philanthropiſt, from your lips ſhe ſhall receive the pledge of my future kindneſs; from your hands this earneſt of my returning affection." Lord Francis took from his pocket-book a bank note of one hundred pounds; "take it to the unfortunate Mrs. Sedgley."

"Not from me, my lord, not from my hand muſt ſhe receive this generous proof of your relenting kindneſs; your voice

voice will ſoothe her ſorrows; your arm will ſhield her from the world's unkindneſs; your protection will defeat the power of envious perſecution."

"I cannot ſee her," replied lord Francis; "I ſhould not be able to ſupport the trial."

"And will you never ſee her?" ſaid Mrs. Morley earneſtly; "can you forget that you once loved her tenderly?"

"A time may come," heſitated lord Francis.

"That time may be too late; think what a weary period a few hours of ſolicitude preſents. Conſult your own feelings, and by them judge what the unhappy Mrs. Sedgley ſuffers." Mrs. Morley's words viſibly affected lord Francis, and they were walking ſlowly by the river ſide, where they perceived, ſtanding on the woody point of the oppoſite precipice, a woman.

She ſeemed impatient; now deſcending by the narrow path of the declivity; now darting amidſt the overhanging trees, which blackened the ſtupendous altitude of ridgy rocks, and caſt a deep ſhadow on the ſlow gliding water. They watched her with fearful agitation. The deep river parted them from the object of their ſolicitude; and the thin vapours of morning rendered her indiſtinctly viſible. Her dreſs was white, which, contraſted with the dark woods behind her, firſt rendered her an object of attention. They haſtened to the ferry at a ſmall diſtance, with the hope of croſſing the river and ſnatching the raſh woman from diſtruction; but on traverſing the oppoſite bank, they ſaw no more of her. Horror and deſpair filled the boſom of Mrs. Morley and lord Francis; they concluded that the victim had periſhed; and,

and, with the moſt deeply impreſſive ſorrow, returned to their lodgings.

Mrs. Morley, with much eloquence, at length perſuaded lord Francis to accompany her to Briſtol in ſearch of Mrs. Sedgley. On their arrival at her lodgings, they were informed that before ſun-riſe ſhe had departed.

On the evening of the following day they ſet out for Derbyſhire. On Mrs. Morley's paſſing within a few miles of Morley-houſe, ſhe found that her huſband had been for ſome time gradually waſting in health and ſtrength, and that little hope was entertained of his recovery. The exquiſite ſenſibility of Martha's heart was rouſed at hearing this intelligence. "Perhaps," ſaid ſhe ſighing, "time and reflection have taught him to think kindly of me. Religion and philanthropy are the antidotes of prejudice and revenge; Mr.

Morley muſt not die in ignorance of my wrongs, nor unſatisfied of my innocence."

Lady Louiſa, who felt the force of Mrs. Morley's appeal to ſympathy, inſtantly offered to become the mediator. The propoſal was accepted, and Martha's hope of an honourable acquittal, triumphed over the affections of her heart. She loved lord Francis; but Mr. Morley was her huſband, her dying huſband; perhaps the victim of miſtaken opinions, or, what was ſtill more painful, of compunctious ſorrows.

They ſtopped at an inn two miles from Morley-houſe. Lord Francis and Martha alighted, while lady Louiſa proceeded in her carriage towards the family manſion. She was ſcarcely out of ſight when Mr. Morley paſſed the window at which his wife and lord Francis were ſtanding.

He

He ſtopped his horſe, and entered the inn. Mrs. Morley's heart beat high with agitation. She flew to meet him; ſhe would have thrown herſelf into his arms; but a repulſive effort flung her from him, and ſhe fell; the blow completely ſtunned her.

Lord Francis, hearing her fall, ruſhed from the apartment where Mrs. Morley had left him, and haſtened to her aſſiſtance. Mr. Morley was wild and frantic. His face was pale and ghaſtly; the ſpirit of implacable revenge raged in his veins, and as lord Francis attempting to raiſe Mrs. Morley from the ground, a blow was aimed at him; it met his breaſt. Lord Francis flew to his piſtols, which he had brought from the carriage, and they inſtantly retired to a field near the road ſide; where, each being deaf to reaſon, madly incenſed, and furiouſly impetuous, they meaſured

meaſured diſtance, and at the ſame moment fired. Mr. Morley's ſhoulder received the ball of his antagoniſt, and he was, ſhortly after, conveyed to Morley-houſe in a ſtate of excruciating torture.

On Mrs. Morley's recovering from the inſenſibility which was occaſioned by the concuſſion of her fall, ſhe perceived lord Francis pale and bloody. Her fears interpreted the deadful ſymptoms, and ſhe was nearly frantic; with the wildneſs of deſpair ſhe haſtened to Morley-houſe. On her attempting to croſs the lawn ſhe was ſtopped by Mrs. Grimwood, who informed her that ſhe could not enter.

"Who ſhall prevent me?" inquired Mrs. Morley. "Is it not my huſband's houſe, my natural home; my rightful, merited aſylum?"

"This

"This houſe," ſaid Mrs. Grimwood, "has a new miſtreſs!"

"Heavenly powers!" exclaimed Mrs. Morley, "the pious, the faſtidious Mr. Morley! can he avowedly protect a miſtreſs?"

"It is even ſo," ſaid Mrs. Grimwood, "but neither my maſter's piety nor his morality can be called in queſtion; for the perſon I allude to is your ſiſter."

"Julia! is it poſſible? then I will deſiſt," cried Mrs. Morley; "I will not debaſe my proudly throbbing breaſt by reſenting ſuch ingratitude. The cold return of ſcorn ſhall be their puniſhment." Mrs. Morley now haſtened back to the inn, where ſhe found lady Louiſa and her brother waiting impatiently for her return. The ball was extracted

extracted the ſame evening, and lord Francis being aſſured by the ſurgeon that Mr. Morley was not in the ſmalleſt danger, the party once more ſet forward to the ducheſs of Chatſworth's.

CHAP. L.

It is proper that the inquiſitive reader ſhould know how Julia came to be the reigning ſovereign of Morley-houſe. Shortly after Mrs. Morley's departure for the continent, her huſband received a letter from Julia, informing him, that Martha had ſet out for Spa with lord Francis Sherville, while ſhe was diſconſolate for the loſs of her mother, and left wholly unprotected to combat her affliction. Mr. Morley, who had always evinced a partiality for Julia, now invited her to paſs her days of mourning at the manor houſe; where her merits and her ſenſibility would be properly appreciated. Julia had waſted many months

months in unbounded diſſipation; ſhe had indulged the capricious feelings of her heart, even at the expence of every moral virtue. Weary of the ſwift routine of folly and of vice, and ſtung by the remembrance of her paſt duplicity, ſhe reſolved on laying ſiege to the heart of Mr. Morley, for three reaſons: firſt, becauſe he was rich and had no heir; ſecondly, becauſe he was declining rapidly to the grave; and thirdly, becauſe being a near relation, the purity of her character would not be violated by her claiming his avowed protection.

Julia ſeemed all ſoftneſs and complacency. She never omitted the duties of devotion. At church ſhe was piouſly humble; at home dignified and ſentimental; ſhe was an admirer of hereditary diſtinctions; ſhe never converſed familiarly with her inferiors; and, above all, ſhe pitied with energetic ſorrow, the unmerited

merited neglect which Mr. Morley had experienced from her ill-fated ſiſter.

With this powerful artillery of arts the ſubtle Julia ſoon undermined the affections of Mr. Morley; and, at the period of her ſiſter's return, ſhe was in full poſſeſſion of that dominion which Martha's noble and ingenuous nature could not accompliſh.

CHAP. LI.

SHORTLY after their arrival at the ducheſs of Chatſworth's, a party was made to Buxton. The name of Mrs. Morley would have terrified the whole phalanx of faſtidious water-drinkers, had ſhe appeared among them under any protection leſs powerful than that of the ducheſs. But the luſtre of her virtue ſhed light on every leſſer conſtellation; and the dark ſhades which prejudice had thrown on Mrs. Morley's character, were wholly done away amidſt the ſplendours of her patroneſs.

The only perſonages who rigidly reſiſted the claims of perſecuted merit, were thoſe that compoſed the Leadenhead family. They could not condeſcend

deſcend to notice a woman who had been an actreſs, and who had ſeparated herſelf from her huſband; though the exerciſe of her talents had been the effect of neceſſity, exciting her to a laudable and honourable ſpecies of obtaining independence; and though her huſband's unkindneſs and neglect had driven her from her natural home, to ſeek for ſupport from an unfeeling world.

The Leadenheads, notwithſtanding their high ſenſe of family dignity, could ſtoop as low as leſſer perſons, where they hoped to obtain a ſmile or a nod from the titled or the exalted. It was only the needy child of genius who had no tribute to hope for from the petrifying hand of avaritious pride; yet if the moſt contaminated ſtream of noble blood deigned to mingle with their dull ſource of circulation, their hearts beat gratefully,

gratefully, and their veins confeſſed a prouder glow of ſelf-importance.

Young Leadenhead, finding that all hopes failed of reconciliation with his frail wife's ſplendid fortune, inſtituted a ſuit in Doctors Commons to ſet aſide the marriage, both parties being under age, and the gentle bride having preſented him an heir at leaſt ſome months before he could have been the natural father. This circumſtance being fully proved, ſucceſs did not fail to attend the legal experiment; and young Leadenhead, once more unencumbered by domeſtic adornments, as well as by domeſtic virtues, ſet out on a new matrimonial purſuit, with that confidence which had ever been the prominent characteriſtic of his family.

Truth was not a perfection much in practice beneath the lofty battlements of Plummet Caſtle; which might well

have been adopted by a modern author of fanciful exhibitions, and juſtly would it have been denominated the Caſtle of Romance. Humphrey had ſo accuſtomed himſelf to the ſallies of his imagination, that every thing except the labours of a gloomy traffic, appeared to him chimerical. Thoſe he found ſubſtantial bleſſings, yet nature had ſo cloſed the avenues of feeling in his boſom, that he was the only perſon who had cauſe to rejoice in their reality.

While the Leadenheads were ſociety-hunting at Buxton, the young and enlightened heir of the family was in full chaſe of another matrimonial alliance. Gregory was not without ſome pretentions to perſonal merit. He was what the generality of obſervers would denominate handſome; if a countenance which preſented the blank page of uncultivated intellects can entitle human features

features to that appellation. In converſation he was as uninformed as the toil-worn Ethiop, whoſe labours give the ſtamp of worth to the baſe droſs, which nature ſcorns to mark as her own ſterling treaſure. He was a man of letters, it is true; but they were only to his groom or to his father's gamekeeper. He wrote many languages, but they were unintelligible even to the moſt learned. With theſe and many minor requiſites young Leadenhead ſet out once more, on a laudable embaſſy to the court of faſhion; his credentials written in characters of gold; the moſt attractive characters to ſordid and uncultivated minds; and the object of his important miſſion was that of ennobling his family.

CHAP. LII.

MRS. SEDGLEY, during her ſojourn at Briſtol, inhabited a ſmall cottage near the hanging woods on the ſummit of thoſe cliffs which tower above the ſlow-winding Avon, oppoſite the wells. The ſight of lord Francis had nearly driven her to deſpair; and at the moment when Mrs. Morley diſcovered her on the tremendous precipice, ſhe was waiting for a boat which ſhe had engaged, in conſequence of having ſeen them the preceding evening, and which was to convey her ſecretly acroſs the channel to Chepſtow.

On landing at the place of her deſtination ſhe wrote a letter to lord Fran-

cis, explaining the agonies of her mind, and expreſſing her deep regret for the evident diſtreſs which her preſence had occaſioned lady Louiſa to ſuffer. This letter never reached the hands of lord Francis till ſix weeks after it was written. He was at Buxton when he received it.

Shortly after the whole party ſet out for London. Mrs. Morley was ſtill the inſeparable friend of lady Louiſa Franklin, and the excluſive object of lord Francis's tendereſt affections. Every day augmented her power over his mind, and every hour convinced her that he was the moſt amiable of mortals.

Mrs. Sedgley's retirement was tranquil, and congenial to her feelings. A pleaſant lodging in a farm houſe (with an annuity of two hundred pounds from the ducheſs of Chatſworth, who had once known, and never ceaſed to love her)

her) preſented more ſerene repoſe to her aching heart than that heart had ever enjoyed in the turmoil of life, or the glittering paths of ever-varying faſhion. Her days paſſed peacefully, and her nights were undiſturbed by feveriſh dreams. She knew that her little Fanny was ſafe under the protection lady Louiſa and lord Francis, and ſhe had too ſenſibly experienced the low, faſtidious prejudices of an unpitying world, to wiſh for any farther intercourſe with its ſociety.

A correſpondence was conſtantly kept up between Mrs. Morley and the world-weary recluſe; but with ſtrict injunctions from the latter never to reveal the place of her retirement.

Six months paſſed, and nothing material occurred in the progreſs of our hiſtory. Little Fanny became a lovely girl, and the darling of her protector's

family. Her infantine graces promiſed all that affection could anticipate, and her ſweetneſs of temper repaid the aſſiduities which were hourly foſtering them to perfection.

Mrs. Sedgley's health appearing to decay, a change of climate was judged abſolutely neceſſary for the preſervation of her exiſtence; ſhe therefore purpoſed, without delay, ſetting out for Switzerland. Six months' retirement from the world had left her no reliſh for its enjoyments. She loathed the din of cities, and with a ſilent, calm delight looked forward to the mountain ſolitudes, where ſhe ſhould become the aſſociate of unſophiſticated beings, the ſtudent of NATURE's ſchool, the inhabitant of thoſe ſolitudes made ſacred by her own philoſopher *.

* Rouſſeau.

On

On her *route* towards Dover ſhe paſſed through the metropolis. Her friendſhip for Martha made her wiſh for an interview previous to her quitting England: but ſhe had a ſtill more powerful incitement — the maternal longings of a heart, ſoftened by ſolitude, and throbbing with regret for what ſhe now conſidered as her paſt unkindneſs. The path which leads towards the grave is ſtrewed with thorns, where the compunctious ſpirit is doomed to meaſure it. It is in its gloomy, awful mazes, that Reaſon ſearches with a diſcriminating eye, and Memory re-contemplates the gaudy ſcenes where Folly danced on roſes, while Pleaſure daſhed the cup of life with poiſons, whoſe dregs were deſtined for the freezing lips of Death.

Mrs. Sedgley had deſerted her unhappy offspring—had left it to the

mercy of an hard-judging world: ſhe had given it to a ſtranger's boſom, without even a name; and though that Power, which ſhields the innocent and foſters the forſaken, had warmed the heart of Martha with the glow of genuine pity, her deed was no leſs criminal. She reflected—ſhe was wretched.

On the night of her arrival in London ſhe repaired to Harley-ſtreet. The family being at the Opera, Mrs. Sedgley inquired for the nurſe who had the care of Fanny. By informing her that ſhe was a diſtant relation of the infant's mother, and on the eve of ſetting out for the continent, ſhe obtained a ſight of her long-loſt infant. The ſorrows which ſhe had been doomed to ſuffer were leſs agonizing than this moment of exceſſive ſenſibility. She preſſed the unacknowledged innocent to her boſom: ſhe bleſſed it, for the firſt time,

time, with a mother's kiſſes: ſhe wiſhed now, ardently wiſhed, to ſteal that precious treaſure which fear and a falſe pride had once induced her to abandon.

She longed to embrace lord Francis: but the recollection of his paſt unkindneſs checked the warm impulſe of affection; and while her boſom throbbed with tenderneſs, it glowed with indignation.

Still, in the delirium of parental joy, ſhe hung over her unconſcious offspring. She raiſed her from the pillow where ſhe was ſleeping. The infant ſhrieked, and ſtruggled to get from her. "Well may'ſt thou ſhun me!" exclaimed the agonized mother: "Well may thoſe eyes behold me with abhorrence—thoſe tears reproach me! Forgive me, innocent, deſerted angel! forgive that wretch whoſe falſe delicacy could maſter her maternal fondneſs—who

could expoſe thy helpleſs infancy to the perils of a world, whoſe ſcorn her timid ſenſibility had not courage to encounter!"

At this moment the nurſe quitted the apartment. Fanny, ſoothed by her mother's ſoftneſs of voice, ſmiled as ſhe ſtretched forth her arms to fold them round Mrs. Sedgley's neck. The ſenſation which this involuntary movement conveyed was ſuch as ſhe had never before experienced. She ſnatched her hitherto-deſerted offspring to her heart, and wrapping it in her cloak, ruſhed out of the nurſery. In a few moments ſhe reached the ſtreet, and on the ſame night ſet off for Dover.

Mrs. Sedgley, previous to her embarkation for the continent, wrote an affectionate letter to lady Louiſa Franklin, thanking her and lord Francis for their

care

care of her deſerted child, and avowing her reſolution to paſs the remainder of her days in Switzerland, far from the pride of her oppreſſors and the ſcorn of an illjudging world.

CHAP. LIII.

THE divorce which had ſeparated Julia from her huſband had ſo completely blazoned the infamy of her conduct, that Mr. Morley deemed his reputation in ſome danger, by affording her any longer an aſylum at Morley-houſe: ſhe had therefore retired to Bath, where, having eſtabliſhed a faro-table in partnerſhip with an Iriſh adventurer, her fortune was ſoon nearly ſquandered, and her beauty faded in a perpetual ſeries of profligate diſſipation. Once more propelled by neceſſity, Julia ſet out for the metropolis, reſolved, like Milwood, to be rich, whatever peril ſhe might encounter in the labour of becoming

becoming ſo. Two thouſand pounds, the remnant of her fortune, were laid out in the purchaſe of a carriage, and the furniture of a houſe in the vicinity of Mary-le-bone. Julia was ſtill pretty; her face, at leaſt, preſented novelty; and for a time ſhe was conſidered as an acquiſition to the world of ſenſeleſs gallantry.

Among the moſt zealous of her admirers was a foreign nobleman, whoſe rank gave conſequence to the object of his devotions, but whoſe neceſſity was the ſource of his convenient idolatry. Julia now reſumed the name of her family, and the daſhing Mrs. Bradford was an object of univerſal envy. Her curricle was the beſt appointed of any in Hyde Park; her dreſs at the Opera, for elegance and ſplendor, exceeded that of any titled *demirep* in the whole courtly circle; her *faro*-bank was re-

ſorted to by all the adventurous minors of nobility; and her table was ſurrounded by divorced women of quality, military ſchool-boys, dotards of diſtinction, needy dependants, and gameſters of the moſt unequivocal reputation.

During one of the nocturnal revels, a conſtant attendant at her faro-bank, a man of *ton* whoſe rank was ſufficient to ſilence the tongue of buſy animadverſion, and whoſe approved courage was the ſhield which covered the very blackeſt vices, introduced a friend to Mrs. Bradford—a friend whom ſhe had ſeen before, but whoſe inebriety at that moment abſorbed the powers of mutual recollection. The ſcheme was ſhortly underſtood by the ſir Clement Cotterel of the ſcene, and Mrs. Bradford readily agreed to ſhare the advantages of the night with her faſhionable *croupier*.

The

The newly-initiated gameſter was ſeated at the vortex of deſtruction; the hoſteſs of the hell kept wiſely in the back ground; and the noon-day ſun ſhed its bright beams on the ſleeping heir of the Leadenhead family; while his divorced wife ſhared the ſum of three thouſand guineas with her thrice-renowned and thrice-infamous confederate.

Here the matter did not terminate. Young Leadenhead had been entruſted with the ſum he had loſt for the purchaſe of a commiſſion. He repreſented the tranſaction as illegal: Mrs. Bradford's houſe was indicted, and the fair hoſteſs ſent to do penance in the gloomy cells of ſolitary confinement.

This unlucky event being announced in the public papers, it was ſoon conveyed, by a variety of channels, to the ear of Mrs. Morley. Mrs. Bradford's

ſituation was the theme of wonder and of pity. She had violated the laws; ſhe deſerved the puniſhment which a leſs popular perſon would inevitably have ſuffered. But Mrs. Bradford was a woman of *haut ton*, and at leaſt a dozen right honourables exerted all their intereſt to reſcue her from her diſgraceful predicament. They did not exert themſelves in vain; for at the expiration of four days the fair tranſgreſſor was liberated, while the adventurous Gregory Leadenhead was content to bear his loſs, with a penitent promiſe to loſe no time in ennobling his family,

Lady Louiſa Franklin having recovered her health, and with it her perſonal attractions, ſir Lionel Beacon once more confeſſed himſelf her zealous admirer. The young baronet had revelled in the plenitude of faſhionable pleaſure, and ſatiety had already ſucceeded

ceeded the fatigues of diſſipation. In addition to the many cauſes for diſguſt which every hour preſented, ſir Lionel had detected his enchanting lady Pen in a *tête-a-tête* party with the younger Leadenhead; and the baronet being more pleaſed than mortified in finding an opportunity to ſhake off his long-worn chains, took leave of the right honourable coquette juſt at the period when lady Louiſa returned to London.

For the firſt moment in his life he felt a ſerious paſſion. Lady Louiſa's boſom owned a powerful pleader in behalf of her truant favourite; and in a few days, with the conſent of lord Francis, they were married.

CHAP. LIV.

JULIA, whoſe credit in the faſhionable world had ſuffered conſiderably by the adventure at her *faro*-table, departed, with her Gallic lover, for the land of liberty; while Mrs. Morley remained the domeſticated friend of the lovely lady Louiſa. Felicity now ſeemed to ſtrew with roſes her journey of exiſtence, and every day looked brighter than the former. This ſcene of rational delight had continued four months, when Mrs. Morley received a letter from Derbyſhire, informing her that her huſband's health required his ſpeedy departure for Italy; and at the ſame time

time requeſting to ſee her previous to his commencing the journey.

The ſummons of a dying, though undeſerving huſband, was not to be reſiſted by a being, generous, noble, and forgiving, like the ill-treated Martha. She had never, in the ſmalleſt inſtance, violated the proprieties of wedded life; ſhe had never been guilty of any action that might, even by the moſt faſtidious, be deemed derogatory to the delicacy of the female character, or the honour of her huſband. Prejudice had been her deſtruction—prejudice, originating in the malevolence of thoſe who envied her felicity.

She informed lady Louiſa of the letter which ſhe had received, and requeſted her counſel, or rather her approbation, of a ſtep which ſhe deemed indiſpenſible. She informed lord

lord Francis of her reſolution once more to ſee Mr. Morley; and, before he cloſed his eyes for ever, to convince him of her innocence. She took her leave of theſe friends of her boſom, and on the day after ſhe received the ſummons ſhe commenced her journey.

On her arrival at Morley-houſe ſhe found her huſband in a ſtate of health which evidently declared his approaching diſſolution. His days had been ſhortened by that ſtern reprover Conſcience; his ſtrength was waſted by nights of feveriſh rumination, and days of immitigable ſorrow. There are mental miſeries which reaſon and reflection cannot meliorate. The conſciouſneſs of having injured the innocent and the defenceleſs is the never-failing ſource of this heart-corroding evil: this ill, which neither time, nor

fortune,

fortune, nor the ſwift *routine* of earthly changes, can obliterate or cure. This miſery was Mr. Morley's.

As Martha approached him, his pale cheek became ſuddenly fluſhed with a ſenſation of agonizing regret, which all his affected ſtoiciſm could not ſuppreſs. He met her on the lawn, and taking her hand, led her into the houſe. He trembled: ſhe was firmly ſerene. The feelings of their minds, at that trying moment, were wholly diſſimilar: he was the voluntary aggreſſor—ſhe the injured ſufferer: he was perturbed, perplexed, and agitated—ſhe was tranquil, collected, and ſelf-acquitted.

They entered the parlour. His looks were languid and his manner confuſed. Mrs. Morley longed to reaſſure him with a ſmile or word of forgiving kindneſs, but ſhe knew that his proud

proud ſpirit hated to be obliged; and ſhe was not without apprehenſions that any conciliatory advance on her ſide might, by giving him freſh confidence, turn the compuction of his heart into a new ſource of tyranny.

She conjectured rightly. Mr. Morley was a being of that order which, to be vanquiſhed, muſt be little feared. He was ſtruggling with a mental monitor, who, by convincing him of his error, ſo greatly humbled his ſelf-love, that his pride was ever ready to become the centinel upon his heart, and to baniſh thence thoſe feelings which would have honoured its ſenſibility. He dreaded the juſt reſentment of an injured woman, and the conviction that he ought to be aſhamed of his paſt conduct, made him ſo. His contrition was therefore involuntary.

After

After a ſilence of ſeveral minutes, during which Mr. Morley endeavoured to ſuppreſs the conflicts of pride and juſtice, he addreſſed his wife: "Martha," ſaid he, "behold the victim of a reproving conſcience! Behold a being, grief-worn and ſubdued! The grave will ſhortly open to receive me. I ſhould expire reſigned and tranquil could I but know that you are——"

At this moment Martha's ſoul ſpoke in the eloquent tear which ruſhed from her pitying heart. Her huſband ſaw it fall. The word with which he meant to conclude was, *happy:* but encouraged by her viſible tenderneſs and returning ſolicitude, he ſubſtituted that of *innocent.* Mrs. Morley ſtarted.

"Forgive my unkindneſs," ſaid her huſband, preſſing her hand to his quivering lips. "I am proud and delicate of my honour——" Here he pauſed—

"an

"an huſband's honour: prove but your innocence——"

"How ſhall I prove it? Conſcious of no offence, I have not even thought of a defence that might acquit me," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"Declare whether or not you are the mother of little Frances."

"Heavens, what a queſtion!" exclaimed Martha, with a ſmile of innocence. She then related the circumſtances ofher firſt diſcovering the infant and its mother at the cottage: but her regard for lord Francis, and the reſpectful affection which ſhe bore towards his family, prevented her making any diſcovery of his being the ſuſpected father.

"Would to heaven I could find its mother!" ſaid Mr. Morley, as Martha concluded her ſtory. "Do you ſuppoſe ſhe is ſtill alive!"

"I hope

"I hope ſo," replied Mrs. Morley.

"Do you think ſo?"

"She lived a few weeks ſince."

"She muſt be found," ſaid Mr. Morley: "her concurring teſtimony would acquit you."

"Am I ſtill ſuſpected?" interrupted Martha, with a bluſh of indignant ſenſibility.

"Not ſuſpected—no, not indeed ſuſpected, Martha," replied her huſband, heſitating and confuſed: "but I would have your fame as ſpotleſs as your mind; I would ſee you blameleſs, exonerated from every ſhadow of imputation."

"What is there to tarniſh my reputation?"

"The profeſſion which you for a time adopted."

"None but the prejudiced and narrow-minded will conſider me culpable

pable from the exerciſe of my talents."

"True: but the pride of my family will be humbled. You know, Martha, that religion is the——"

"Talk not of religion," interrupted Mrs. Morley, "after what you have done!"

"What have I done?" inquired her huſband, growing ſtill more pale and agitated.

"Deſerted and expoſed to ſcorn, an innocent wife!"

"Wife!" repeated Mr. Morley: "Yes, Martha," ſaid he, recovering himſelf, "you are my wife. I have been to blame. But your ſorrows were not wholly of my creating: your ſiſter——"

"Julia?" cried Mrs. Morley."

"Yes,

"Yes, Julia: ſhe was the ſerpent whoſe ſubtle poiſon contaminated your repoſe: ſhe firſt told me——"

"What?"

"That you were infamous!"

"O God! is it poſſible?" cried Mrs. Morley: "my ſiſter!"

"That ſiſter was your rival. The child ſhe bore was mine! She was the ſoft, ſeducing fiend that tempted me to the deſtruction of your happineſs; and I ſhould even to this hour have been the dupe of her artifice, had I not ſuſpected that, to augment her catalogue of crimes, ſhe neglected and deſtroyed it."

Mrs. Morley fell into her huſband's arms, overpowered with horror.

"Martha, exert your fortitude," cried Mr. Morley. "Remember, you have yet an awful taſk to perform: you

have yet to close the eyes of a repentant sufferer!"

"O, heaven forbid!" cried Mrs. Morley, throwing her arms round the drooping form of her subdued and dying husband. "I forgive you all! I can forgive and pity even your unjust suspicions! Revive, live, and be happy!"

"That is impossible," replied her husband: "I have a load of sorrow on my heart that weighs it down to despondency.—But we must find the mother of your fugitive."

"She resides in Switzerland," said Mrs. Morley: "she has long been weary of the world, and now, I trust, enjoys that calm felicity which its busy scenes denied her. I know her place of residence; for I have never, during all the changes of her destiny, amidst the anguish

anguiſh of fond regret, or the perpetual preſſure of unmerited viciſſitudes, forgotten her."

"Tell me her name," ſaid Mr. Morley, eagerly.

"I muſt firſt obtain her leave," replied Martha. "The confidence of ſorrow is too ſacred to be violated for any intereſted motives. She has already been compelled to bear inſult, neglect, and ſcorn; ſhall I, who am her friend, the deareſt friend ſhe has, betray her? Shall I drag forth her treaſured ſilent griefs to public view, and expoſe her poverty to the unpitying eye of vulgar obſervation?"

"Your own reputation is at ſtake," ſaid Mr. Morley.

"And ſo is hers."

"Think of the diſgrace that you will ſuffer."

"That diſgrace I bear," ſaid Mrs. Morley; "and having, by an adverſe deſtiny, ſo long endured it, I have been taught to know its pain too well to inflict it on another."

"An huſband claims this confidence."

"And a dear ſuffering friend deſerves it," ſaid Mrs. Morley.

"Remember, Martha, I can command a fortune that will enſure you every pleaſure, every means of gratifying the utmoſt wiſhes of your heart," ſaid Mr. Morley: "you will act wiſely in ſatisfying my mind on this important ſubject."

"You would but ill beſtow your wealth on a being who could break a promiſe made ſo ſolemnly to ſuch a woman. The ſufferings of ſuperior natures bear a charm that twines about the

the heart; for grief and perſecution fall moſt heavily on that boſom whoſe fibres are ſoftened by early habits of tenderneſs and ſenſibility."

"You acknowledge ſome *diſtinctions* in ſociety, then?" ſaid Mr. Morley, with an approving ſmile.

"I reſpect ſuperior talents, when they are converted to laudable uſes by the poliſh of education," replied Martha; "and humanity tells us to ſoothe the unhappy."

"True, Martha—true, my love!" interrupted Mr. Morley, taking her hand, and again preſſing it to his lips.

"Beſides," continued Martha, "the mother of poor Frances has no friend to ſolace her afflictions. Deſtined to endure a melancholy exile, ſhe mourns the falſehood of an ungrateful huſband."

"Huſband!" repeated Mr. Morley. "Is ſhe then married?"

"Married and deſerted," replied Martha: "left to encounter the ſcorn of a taunting and pitileſs world, yet bleſt with a mind ſo rich and ſo enlightened, that even its ſevereſt ſcorn cannot ſubdue her fortitude."

"Left by an ungrateful huſband! married, and then deſerted!" again repeated Mr. Morley.

"Does her deceiver live? Of what rank is he? This is not a moment to diſſemble. The happineſs of an amiable woman, (for as ſuch you report the mother of Fanny), the future welfare of the infant, my peace of mind, and your own honour, demand an unequivocal explanation."

"The father of poor Fanny is a man of the moſt exalted rank."

"Indeed!"

"Moſt

"Moſt certainly," anſwered Martha: "a man who, to all outward ſeeming, is the moſt honourable, the moſt liberal of mortals."

"You know him, Martha? It is in vain that you would endeavour to deceive me," ſaid Mr. Morley, with encreaſed agitation.

"I do know him; and I ſhould, but for his conduct reſpecting the mother of Fanny, idolize his name."

"Perdition ſeize him!" exclaimed Mr. Morley, ſtarting from his ſeat, and becoming pale with anger. Then ſuddenly turning haſtily towards his wife, he continued, "Is it well, madam—is it decent to avow your fondneſs even in the preſence of an injured huſband? But lord Francis Sherville, though placed on the higheſt eminence of fortune, is not above the penalty of his diſhonour. His crimes appear with tenfold enor-

mity, becauſe they are placed on an altitude which renders them more conſpicuous than thoſe of common beings. Born to embelliſh ſociety, to exhibit an example to thoſe of an humbler deſtiny, his birth, his education, his noble, liberal mind, on which you ſo love to expatiate, ſhould teach him to ſoar above the vices of vulgar individuals."

Mrs. Morley's eyes were bent upon the ground. She ſighed: but ſhe felt the truth of her huſband's reaſoning; and even her partiality for lord Francis could not urge a plea in extenuation of his conduct. Mr. Morley, after a ſhort pauſe, again addreſſed her.

"You do not anſwer me! Are then even the vices of lord Francis exempt from your abhorrence? Cannot your fond, your fatal enthralment yield to the conviction of his unworthineſs?"

"Lord

"Lord Francis is but a mortal," ſaid Mrs. Morley, with a ſtill deeper ſigh; "and heaven can bear witneſs that my regret has been ſevere as his folly has reprehenſible."

"Folly!" repeated Mr. Morley: "What a ſoftening impulſe is that of love, when it poſſeſſes the weak heart of woman! So, then, the atrocities of lord Francis Sherville are denominated follies! In men leſs idolized they would be deemed rank vices, contaminating poiſons, which ſhould be exterminated, leſt they infect the very ſource of moral virtue. Lord Francis Sherville is exempt from blame, becauſe he is gifted by Nature with the privilege to err."

"Pardon me," interrupted Martha: "I never even attempted to excuſe lord Francis: his conduct has been cruel, but the pride of his family and his high

birth were the deſtroyers of his honour."

"You confeſs, then, that lord Francis *is* the father of your infant?"

"He is the father of poor Fanny," replied Martha.

"And the mother," ſaid Mr. Morley——

"Still loves him, ſtill adores him," anſwered Martha. "All the combining powers of reaſon and reflection cannot ſubdue the fatal dominion which he has obtained over her feelings."

"Inſulting woman!" exclaimed Mr. Morley. "You love lord Francis—you adore him! Your cunning cannot hide the ſecret you would wiſh to cheriſh. Lord Francis is a villain! I know the cauſe of his infernal conduct: to me he ſhall anſwer for it; by me he ſhall, with all his rank and all his virtues,

tues, be taught the leſſon of retribution." Mrs. Morley's colour changed from red to pale; her features were fixed by the melancholy reverie which poſſeſſed her mind. Mr. Morley became more agitated by Martha's ſilence, becauſe it evinced the ſecret ſorrow of her heart; and after pacing about the room for ſeveral minutes, he ſuddenly quitted it, leaving her to indulge her perplexing ruminations.

Mr. Morley's mind was no leſs unquiet than Martha's. He felt the ſtrongeſt conviction that lord Francis had ſeduced his wife, from a motive of which the reader will be ſhortly acquainted. Every event reſpecting the birth of Fanny tended to confirm his opinion; and while he anxiouſly awaited the proofs of her innocence, he was more than half convinced of her guilt, by that prejudging, dangerous ſuſpicion

which, having conjured up a phantom to torment him, hourly cheriſhed all the agonies which jealouſy and conſcious diſſimulation kept alive within his boſom.

The peeviſh inquietude of Mr. Morley's mind did not either ſoften or diminiſh by the augmentation of corporeal ſuffering. His decaying health only tended to increaſe the irritability of his nature; and having, by habit, learnt to think himſelf deceived, he had wholly relinquiſhed the ſuſtaining charms of confidence and affection. He was watchful rather to detect his wife's falſehood than to be convinced of her innocence. He was more diſpoſed to believe her guilty than to confeſs, by the rectitude of her conduct, that he had been the dupe of his own credulity.

Mrs. Morley, with the ſerenity of conſcious truth, watched the varying emotions

emotions of her huſband's mind, and reſolved on awaiting placidly for the moment which was to decide her deſtiny. Every arrangement was made for their departure from England, and Martha looked forward impatiently to that period which ſhe felt confidently aſſured would exonerate her from every imputation.

CHAP. LV.

On the morning previous to their departure from Derbyſhire Mr. Morley appeared more calm and compoſed than he had been during many preceding days. His mind ſeemed ſettled into a penſive reſignation, and while he looked with earneſt and impreſſive ſadneſs on the placid countenance of an ill-treated wife, ſometimes a ſudden fluſh, or tear of ſelf-reproof, would betray ſuch feelings as nearly taught her to pardon even his ſuſpicions.

"Is every thing ready for our long journey?" inquired Martha, as ſhe took her ſeat at the breakfaſt-table.

"Every thing," ſighed Mr. Morley. "I am

"I am impatient to depart," cried Martha; "for your health and peace of mind require much care, much kind attention."

"My peace of mind! Ah! Martha, that will never be reſtored! I have a thorn too deeply planted in my heart ever to be extracted."

"I truſt that you deceive yourſelf," ſaid Martha.

"Was not the father of Fanny a villain?" interrupted Mr. Morley.

Martha made no reply.

"Is not the woman whom he deceived to blame for ſcreening him from the obloquy he merits?"

"There is ſomething in the preſent inſtance due to feelings, more ſacred and more delicate than thoſe of reſentment."

"Why?" inquired Mr. Morley haſtily.

"Becauſe

"Becauſe he is her huſband."

"Then you confeſs that *huſbands* have a claim to ſome reſpect?"

"I never yet denied it. Religion as well as moral virtue ſhould be the ſafeguard of an huſband's honour."

"Deareſt Martha!" cried Mr. Morley, taking her hand as he interrupted her, "had your ſentiments been always ſuch—your conduct ever thus—we had been happy."

Little more paſſed till they ſet out for London, where Mr. Morley propoſed remaining a fortnight or three weeks for the advantage of the beſt medical advice previous to his continental journey.

On their arrival in the metropolis a ſplendid houſe was hired in Albemarle-ſtreet. Mr. Morley had provided an handſome retinue for his foreign expedition, and Martha once more appeared in

in all the elegancies of life which her huſband's fortune could procure.

Now came her hour of triumph; now the ſelf-intereſted, baſely-thinking herd of worldly ſycophants ſought her with eagerneſs, and ſmiled upon her with unbounded admiration. Her huſband's ſanction obliterated the tarniſh which her reputation had received, and her door was thronged with long-deſerting friends, who, in return for their paſt kindneſs, were refuſed admittance.

From her window (how ſtriking was the contraſt of a few ſhort weeks!) ſhe ſaw the ſervile bow and the ſoft ſmile of pliant condeſcenſion. She marked the change; ſhe ſhuddered at the baſeneſs of the human mind; ſhe felt the juſt ſcorn of an exalted ſoul, and repaid the worthleſs tribe with ſilent indignation.

Among

Among others who called at Mrs. Morley's door was lord Francis Sherville. The name of ſuch an inquirer filled her mind with undeſcribable agitation. She had promiſed to diſcover the father, and to elucidate the myſtery of Fanny's birth; ſhe had determined to ſacrifice the hopes of lord Francis, in juſtice to Mrs. Sedgley's wrongs and her own reputation; ſhe feared that the ſight of him might induce her to ſwerve from her purpoſe, and ſhe ſighed deeply even at the moment that ſhe felt the neceſſity of expoſing his baſeneſs. In lord Francis Sherville ſhe fancied ſhe contemplated the moſt extraordinary of characters; the moſt noble, and at the ſame time the moſt cruel nature; the moſt generous and the moſt intereſting of mortals; the preſerver of Fanny—the deſtroyer of Mrs. Sedgley. How obvious were the fine diſtinctions betwixt

twixt vice and virtue! how laudable were the father's feelings! how barbarous the huſband's falſehood!

The ſtruggle which her mind experienced, where the love of juſtice and the ſentiment of affection contended equally for pre-eminence, may eaſily be imagined; yet ſhe fancied that it would be nobler to avow, with that ingenuouſneſs which had ever been the prominent characteriſtic of her ſoul, the determination ſhe had formed, than baſely to harbour the littleneſs of reſentment, and inflict a puniſhment without acquainting the offender with his crime. While her mind was ruminating on theſe circumſtances, the ſubject of them a ſecond time requeſted earneſtly to be admitted. Mr. Morley was abſent from home, and Mrs. Morley conſented to ſee lord Francis.

The meeting was embarraſſed on both ſides. Lord Francis perceived a cold repulſive ſpell, which Martha had ſuffered to command her affections; and though ſhe ſighed as he approached her, it was rather the ſigh of regret for paſt hopes than of the conſciouſneſs of preſent happineſs.

Lord Francis experienced the very acme of chagrin. He heſitated—he was fearful of inquiring the cauſe, while he felt the full force of her evident diſpleaſure.

After many attempts to ſpeak, he requeſted to know by what means he had forfeited Mrs. Morley's good opinion. "What has been my fault? How have I ſinned againſt you?" ſaid lord Francis.

"Your fault you know: your ſins are yet within the reach of pardon," replied Mrs. Morley. "I firſt valued your

your eſteem, becauſe I thought your mind as perfect as your manners were attaching."

"And how have I forfeited your kindneſs? Who can accuſe me of any action which merits your reproof?"

"Mrs. Sedgley——"

Lord Francis ſhrunk, and ſeemed to ſhudder. "Mrs. Sedgley has forfeited all claims to my protection," ſaid he: "ſhe has diſgraced the name ſhe bears."

"The name which ſhe *ought* to bear, you would ſay, lord Francis; and till ſhe be permitted to reſume it, I cannot own it as the name of my friend."

Lord Francis ſighed deeply.

"Will my reconciliation to Mrs. Sedgley enſure me your eſteem? Will it reinſtate me in your good opinion?"

After a pauſe of ſome moments, during which Mrs. Morley felt more than ſhe

ſheda red acknowledge, while ſhe hoped yet dreaded to behold lord Francis and Mrs. Sedgley re-united, ſhe replied, "Unqueſtionably."

"Then (for I am no ſtranger to your intended journey) you ſhall ſee us completely reconciled. You ſhall behold me while I preſs her to my heart, while I forgive her indiſcretions, and avow myſelf her deareſt friend, her tendereſt——"

Mrs. Morley's cheek became as pale as aſhes: ſhe was near ſinking to the ground. All her affection for lord Francis returned. They began to maſter the heroic ſentiment which friendſhip for Mrs. Sedgley had prompted: ſhe recollected the declining ſtate of Mr. Morley's health—the more than prohable chance of her being the wife of lord Francis. The agitation of her heart warmed and awakened all its

its ſenſibility. She roſe to quit the room.

Lord Francis was no novice in the intricacies of the paſſions. He had ſtudied the female heart: he had been accuſtomed to ſubdue it. He was convinced that Martha loved him; and he conjured her to promiſe, that when he had proved his regard for Mrs. Sedgley, his reward ſhould be equal to his affection.

Mrs. Morley trembled. Lord Francis caught her hand, and preſſed it to his lips. At that moment Mr. Morley entered the room. Lord Francis retired in the utmoſt agitation; and Martha, unable to ſupport the fluttering perturbation of her heart, ſunk at the feet of her aſtoniſhed huſband.

Mr. Morley's mind was ſternly fortified for the elucidation of a myſtery which he had long dreaded, and was

now determined to explore. He was ſullenly ſilent. Not a ſyllable of reproach paſſed his lips from the period of lord Francis's viſit till the following day, when they ſet out for Paris on their route to Switzerland. His reſolution was ſtrengthened by the hope of a ſpeedy termination of every thing like doubt reſpecting his wife's infidelity; and he determined that his vengeance ſhould be as complete as his wrongs were unequivocal.

Lord Francis, immediately on his quitting Mrs. Morley, departed for the continent, for the purpoſe of effecting a complete reconciliation with the deſerted Mrs. Sedgley.

CHAP. LVI.

On their arrival at the hotel *de la Liberté*, near the barrier of Paris, they found themſelves ſurrounded with guards, and the objects of ſuſpicion. Every eye viewed them with inquiſitive and menacing contempt; while the anxiety which Mrs. Morley's ingenuous nature could not conceal, only tended to augment the dangers of their ſituation. They had been twelve hours in Paris, when they were ſeized and conveyed to the priſon of the *Abbaye*, where every horror and every inſult convinced them, that their peril was no leſs imminent than certain.

They had been four days in this ſtate of miſery and ſuſpenſe, when Mrs.

Morley was ſummoned to attend the ruler of her deſtiny. With a palpitating boſom ſhe reached the hotel, guarded by two ſoldiers. It was ſpacious and ſplendid. She aſcended the ſtairs to the firſt ſuite of apartments; ſhe entered a ſaloon magnificently furniſhed; and ſhe beheld a barbarous, an unrelenting judge, the abandoned Julia. Mrs. Morley ſhrieked and fainted.

On recovering from the effect of her ſurprize and ſudden agitation, ſhe looked around in vain for her ſiſter. The unnatural fiend had departed, leaving her to the mercy of two inſulting ruffians; while ſhe with eager haſte repaired to the *Abbaye* in ſearch of Mr. Morley.

His liberation was offered, on condition that ſhe ſhould be the companion of his journey. "I have long loved you," ſaid Julia, "and rather than ſee you re-united to my ſiſter, I will ſee you periſh.

periſh. Your life is in my hands. My lover is your judge; and he is all powerful, the daring Robeſpierre."

Mr. Morley was almoſt petrified with horror! but he diſdained to accept his liberty on ſuch terms; death had long menaced the termination of his compunctious torments, and he had little mercy to expect, from the capricious paſſions of an unfeeling woman. He anſwered her with ſcorn and with reproaches; ſhe aimed a dagger at his breaſt; he warded off the blow: ſhe ſhrieked; accuſed him of the premeditated deed; and ordered him to a more cloſe confinement. He ſmiled, and followed the jailor to his dungeon.

During three weeks Mr. Morley and his diſtracted wife were lodged in ſeparate ſubterraneous cells; no ſun beamed on their aching eyelids; no refreſhing breeze viſited their deſpairing boſoms; when at dawn-light their dungeons were

thrown open, and they were conducted forth to witneſs the laſt ſcene of their perſecutor's miſery; on a ſcaffold, pale, ghaſtly, lacerated, trembling at his approaching deſtiny, and ſhuddering while he anticipated the juſt vengeance of an offended Creator, they beheld the homicide Robeſpierre.

Mrs. Morley, whoſe ſublimity of ſoul neither inſult nor oppreſſion could contaminate, flew to the hotel where ſhe had laſt ſeen her abandoned ſiſter. She found the gates all open; the populace had plundered the apartments; ſhe entered the ſaloon, beyond the antichamber; the floor was deluged with blood! murder had been permitted to blur the face of noon-day, and the abode of guilty luxury now preſented the mere wrecks of deſolation. Every wretch, whoſe heart had palpitated under the tyranny of the remorſeleſs deſpot, now dealt

dealt its groans and exerciſed its vengeance, on even thoſe objects which, only by being inanimate, had eſcaped his cruelty.

Martha was ſtricken with terrors that nearly annihilated her; ſhe had never witneſſed ſuch a ſcene, and imagination had not power to paint it. As ſoon as the firſt ſpell of horror began to ſubſide, ſhe ruſhed through the apartments wild and aſtoniſhed; the hangings which were of velvet were torn from the walls and trampled by the multitude; the coſtly plates of looking-glaſs were ſhattered in every direction; the inlaid cabinets defaced and thrown upon the ground; the ſplendid luſtres torn from their ſuſpending chains, and ſtrewed about in glittering fragments. She entered the chamber of the exterminated monſter: the bed on which he had ſlumbered, but not repoſed; the pillow

on which he had, for many preceding months, preſſed his guilt-fevered brain, now ſupported the head of the life-leſs, ſelf-murdered Julia. Her blacken-ing form declared the potency of that poiſon, which freed her ſoul from mor-tal, conſcious miſery, to endure—— Here let her memory reſt.

CHAP. LVII.

AFTER paying a large bribe for the interment of Julia's corpſe, on the ſame evening Mr. Morley and his wife purſued their *route* towards Switzerland. Martha was too deeply impreſſed with the horrors of the paſt twelve hours, to feel the joy of being once more reſtored to liberty. The ſorrow which ſunk deep into her mind, took from it every ſenſe of anticipated pleaſure; and, in the agitations of regret, the anguiſh of a ſtill vivid recollection, even her friend Mrs. Sedgley was forgotten.

On Mrs. Morley's arrival at Lauſanne, ſhe requeſted permiſſion to viſit Mrs. Sedgley alone, in order to apprize

her of the motive which prompted her journey. Mr. Morley readily conſented, and waited impatiently for the interview. The pride of his heart was intereſted in this meeting becauſe he ſuppoſed that it was deſtined to exculpate his name from diſhonour, by ſanctioning his long cheriſhed revenge. The idea of Martha's having deceived him, and of her being the parent of the little fugitive, ſtill ſo powerfully poſſeſſed his mind, that all other ruminations were wholly abſorbed by the ſtrong ruling power of ſelf-love, acting upon feelings with which the reader is already acquainted.

The ſpot which Mrs. Sedgley had choſen as the abode of her unrepining ſorrows, was beautifully romantic. It was ſituated on the borders of a lake, adorned with vineyards, and ſheltered by mountains, at once grand and ſtupendous. Neatneſs and ſimplicity were the ſubſtitutes

ſtitutes for leſs enervating luxuries; while the charm of ſolitude was rendered doubly pleaſing, by the diſguſt ſcarcely yet obliterated from the mind of the recluſe. Sweet were the noiſeleſs labyrinths, which wound alone the acclivity; and impreſſive was the Alpine ſolitude which enabled her to look down upon the din of life, without one ſigh to interrupt its ſilence.

As Mrs. Morley approached the threſhold, the ſetting-ſun ſhone on the yellow front of the ruſtic habitation. The whiteneſs of the high-towering peaks which formed a ſpiral amphitheatre, mingled with the ſcattered clouds half reddened or empurpled by the reflecting horizon; while the thin miſts of evening roſe in grey flakes from the ſtill water, refreſhing the ſcorched and interwoven vineyard over which they floated.

On the ſtep of the cottage-door was ſeated little Fanny. Mrs. Morley ran towards her, and preſſing her to her boſom, beſtowed on her a thouſand kiſſes. Mrs. Sedgley was abſent; ſhe had wandered up the mountain to the cell of an hermit, in whoſe ſolitary abode ſhe found both wiſdom and philoſophy. A little girl, the ſimple inmate of Mrs. Sedgley's habitation, pointed out the path, and Martha with the ſmiling Fanny haſtened towards the hermitage.

The aſcent was ſteep, and the evening ſultry. The light breezes which roſe from the valley ſcarcely ruffled the dry foliage of the ſurrounding plantations. The duſk of twilight thickened, and the laſt crimſon glow of light receded from the horizon. Mrs. Morley was weary, for ſhe had borne Fanny in her arms; and ſhe ſeated herſelf on the ſteps

ſteps of a rude croſs, which the hermit had placed on a jutting part of the precipice. Here again ſhe kiſſed and preſſed her little companion to her boſom. "My Fanny, my own darling Fanny," exclaimed Martha; "what have I not ſuffered for thy ſake? what have I not borne, rather than betray the parent who deſerted thee?"

As ſhe ſpoke ſhe heard a ruſtling among the trees, and in a moment Mr. Morley darted forth like one that was deprived of reaſon. He had followed Martha; he had heard her expreſſions of fondneſs, her kiſſes, her ſighs, as ſhe addreſſed her innocent companion. His countenance was wild and furious.

"You have deceived me, vile and abandoned woman!" exclaimed Mr. Morley, graſping one arm, while with the other ſhe ſhielded Fanny from his reſentment. "Mrs. Sedgley is not

the mother of this infant; confeſs that ſhe is not; own that you have practiſed on my weak credulity; avow your infamy, and ſhew yourſelf the wretch you really are."

Mrs. Morley was amazed and terrified. The countenance of her huſband beſpoke the horrible purpoſes which wrung his brain; his eyes rolled wildly, now glancing towards heaven, then bending gloomily on the deep and darkening valley. The infant, as if actuated by an inſtinctive terror, looked fearfully at Martha, while her little arms were cloſely interwoven round her neck. She kiſſed it, and burſting into tears, reproached Mr. Morley for his unfeeling rage; every careſs which ſhe beſtowed augmented his diſtraction. They ſtood upon the jutting point of the precipice; the hour was awfully ſtill; not a breath of wind was heard;

the

the gloom every moment deepened, and the trembling child crept close into the bosom which shielded it; accustomed to see no woman but Mrs. Sedgley, it knew no accent but that of nature; and with a trembling voice it addressed Mrs. Morley by the name of *mother*.

"Accursed bastard!" exclaimed the frantic Morley, "she *is* thy mother!" while with one convulsive hand pressing his brain, the other grasped the arm of his wife, who shrieked with agony. The sound of her voice echoed down the mountain, and, in a moment, lord Francis Sherville presented himself before them.

"Oh! shield your helpless innocent from destruction," exclaimed Mrs. Morley, while she held forth the trembling Fanny. Mr. Morley, maddened with jealous rage, rushed forward, and before

before lord Francis could interpoſe, tearing the child from Martha's arms, ſprang towards the edge of the acclivity.

Lord Francis was terror-ſtruck; but he had ſtill power to hold the arm of Morley, while Martha fell at his feet and in the agony of fear and tenderneſs conjured him to be merciful, "For its mother's ſake O, ſpare it!" cried ſhe claſping his knees and bathing them with tears.

"Infamous woman!" exclaimed Morley, "let looſe your arms. I will not be defrauded of my vengeance."

"Then let it fall on me.—"

"On *me*," cried lord Francis, interrupting Mrs. Morley, "*I* claim the infant."

"Then claim it in hell!" vociferated the frantic huſband, at the ſame moment ſtruggling to obtain the infant and looking with the wildneſs of a maniac towards the deep and darkened valley.

Lord

Lord Francis held his arms; the infant ſhrieked repeatedly.

"Rend it to atoms!" cried Morley; "for alive you never ſhall again behold it!"

"Monſter of cruelty!" exclaimed Martha, "would you be a murderer?"

They now heard footſteps proceeding down the flinty path-way; they called for help, and Mrs. Sedgley flew towards them. As ſoon as ſhe perceived the frenzied group ſhe exclaimed, "My child! my infant! oh Morley, Morley! thou inhuman *father!*"

Mr. Morley heard the fiat of his deſtiny! He heard it pronounced by lady Suſan Sherville; the ſiſter of the noble, the liberal lord Francis. The deſerted mother of his *own* unknown offſpring.

Lady Suſan was conveyed by her brother and Mrs. Morley, to the hermit's cell. They had witneſſed the juſt vengeance of inſulted Heaven! They

had ſeen the libertine who, under the maſk of ſanctity, had violated all the laws of honour and religion, who had aſſumed through life the name of a philanthropiſt merely as a ſafeguard from ſuſpicion, periſh! The ſcene was awfully impreſſive. It was the ſtern judgment of an offended God, exemplified amidſt the grandeſt works of nature! Darkneſs no longer veiled the hour. The moon aſcended majeſtically ſolemn above the white Alpine ſummits. The wind roſe ſuddenly; and the ſhrill guſt howled over the hermit's ruſhy hovel. The venerable recluſe attended the ſilent group to lady Suſan's cottage. Often did they liſten, as they deſcended the narrow path, to hear whether a groan met their ears, when ſilence marked an interval between the guſts of wind, till they arrived at the vineyard, which ſpread its brown amphitheatre along the circling border of the lake.

The

The hermit liſtened, and ejaculated, "Father of mercies! Awful in judgment! Omnipotent in power! thy will be done!"

He was prompted by an awful ſignal! The agonized ſigh of a deep-wounded ſpirit, preparing to take its flight to worlds unknown. On the margin of the lake, writhing with agonies, both mental and corporeal, lay the expiring Morley. The mangled body was conveyed to lady Suſan's cottage. The hermit paſſed his night in prayer. Lady Suſan and Mrs. Morley waſted theirs in tears.

The ſufferer was ſtill ſenſible. He claſped his injured wife to his convulſed and bleeding boſom. He implored lady Suſan's forgiveneſs. He ſhuddered when he beheld her generous brother.

In the delirium of fever which preceded his diſſolution, he talked wildly of Julia and her murdered infant. Confeſſed that to ſcreen his name from obloquy, *he* had ſupplied the means for its deſtruction; and fearful that at ſome unguarded moment ſhe might reveal the ſecret, owned that he had, by his information, occaſioned the diſgrace which had compelled her to quit England.

The fever every moment augmented; his limbs were fractured; his whole body bruiſed and lacerated; he dictated a ſhort deed, by which he divided his fortune between Martha and little Fanny; and, as the bright dawn broke over the top of the mountains, cloſed his darkened eyes, in *death*.

CHAP. LVIII.

AFTER the firſt concuſſion of horror had ſubſided, and the brain began to feel the returning powers of reflection, lady Suſan informed Mrs. Morley of her motive for firſt leaving Fanny under her protection. "I had in vain endeavoured to ſoften the indignation of my family; I had firmly and inviolably kept my reſolution, not to diſcloſe the name or condition of my betrayer. For, alas! though rendered the moſt wretched of the human race, I ſtill loved him too tenderly to expoſe him to the reſentment

ment of my brother, whoſe high-ſouled ſenſibility would have produced a rencontre which muſt have terminated fatally. I knew that your nature was tender, as it was exalted; and I conſigned my offspring to your boſom, beneath the roof of its unnatural father.

" On the day of my departure, from the village, I ſtopped the chaiſe when I reached the ſummit of a neighbouring hill, and for the laſt time contemplated the wretched dwelling where my child firſt ſaw the light. I alſo plainly diſtinguiſhed the front of Morley-houſe, where I hoped that ſhe was deſtined to find a ſafe aſylum. Oh God! how did my heart palpitate, how did my tears flow when I reflected, that perhaps I ſhould embrace my child no more. but the pride of ſhame was more powerful than the tenderneſs of maternal

ternal ſorrow. I cloſed my eyes and fled."

"I conjure you to think of it no more," ſaid Mrs. Morley, "I truſt that my guilty huſband's laſt hour of ſuffering has expiated his crimes, and that his fate will afford a leſſon to the vicious; your patience, an example to the perſecuted; and my ſorrows a proof of the danger which always awaits a precipitate marriage."

As ſoon as lady Suſan had made arrangements for her journey, ſhe ſet out with her brother, Mrs. Morley, and little Fanny for England; where, as ſpeedily as the decencies of life would permit, lord Francis ſolicited and received the hand of Mrs. Morley; who beſtowed it on one condition only, which was, that of lady Suſan's accepting her ſhare of Mr. Morley's fortune.

If the reader amidſt theſe buſy changes ſhould deſire to know what became of lady Penelope Pryer, it will be ſufficient eulogium on her merit to ſay, that by her alliance with the junior Leadenhead, ſhe has at this hour the honour of ENNOBLING HIS FAMILY.

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